

WOOLLASTON



THE WALLACE ARTS TRUST COLLECTION
1931 - 1996

A JAMES WALLACE ARTS TRUST PUBLICATION

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© 2015 text Oliver Stead

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The James Wallace Arts Trust
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72 Hillsborough Rd
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1931 - 1996

FOREWORDS BY
HON PHILIP WOOLLASTON AND SIR JAMES WALLACE

TEXT BY
OLIVER STEAD

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	7
FOREWORD	
HON PHILIP WOOLLASTON	9
SIR JAMES WALLACE	10
INTRODUCTION	13
RICH HARVEST: THE WALLACE ARTS TRUST COLLECTION OF WORKS BY SIR MOUNTFORD TOSSWILL WOOLLASTON BY OLIVER STEAD	
I TOSS WOOLLASTON AND JAMES WALLACE	15
II EARLY YEARS	28
III HARD YEARS	34
IV ERUA	38
V BREAKTHROUGH AND RECOGNITION	42
VI LATE MASTERPIECES	46
SELECT CHRONOLOGY	54
CATALOGUE OF WORKS	63
SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	184

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Ronald Winstone kindly made brilliant new photographs of all of the Woollastons in the Wallace Arts Trust Collection, using a Phase One camera generously made available for the exercise by Photo Warehouse Ltd. Ronald's understanding, skill and devotion to accuracy have added tremendously to the value of this project.

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Kerry Aberhart graciously made available a fantastic collection of personal photographs for the Trust to study during research for the catalogue, documenting many occasions when he and his family were together with Toss Woollaston, and kindly providing permission for the Trust to reproduce some of these in this volume.

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FOREWORD

HON PHILIP WOOLLASTON

The role of the art collector is at least as important to artists as that of the dealer - and as often misunderstood by the wider public. Serious collectors not only provide, as patrons, a source of income for artists, they are often also the means by which the artist can reach a wider audience - sharing, exhibiting and lending to public institutions the works they have bought.

Sir James Wallace bought his first painting, a Toss Woollaston watercolour, half a century ago for the best of possible reasons. He liked it. In the decades since, that purchase grew into a collection and then a public institution - the James Wallace Arts Trust, the product of Sir James's personal philanthropy. Art philanthropy is comparatively rare in New Zealand, unlike Europe and America where it is nourished by more enlightened taxation policies than ours. When it does occur here it is to be applauded.

By deciding to make his collection a 'diary' of the emergence and development of modern and contemporary art in New Zealand, rather than merely an expression of his own taste and preferences, Sir James has created an amazing asset. In particular, he has assembled a unique collection of Toss Woollaston paintings. Spanning 65 years (1931 to 1996) and comprising approximately 130 works including some 28 significant oils, it covers every period of my father's long career in both landscape and portraiture.

The Toss Woollaston Trust and Toss's family are grateful to Sir James and his fellow trustees for mounting this exhibition of the 'Wallace Woollastons'. This illustrated catalogue, with text by Oliver Stead, will not only provide a permanent record of the exhibition but, through reproduction, make these works accessible to a new generation of New Zealanders.

Philip Woollaston
Upper Moutere
April 2015

FOREWORD

SIR JAMES WALLACE

The first work of art I ever bought was Toss Woollaston's watercolour *Otago Cobb Cottage*, in 1964. This was my title as it reminded me of such cottages in the Central Otago landscape which I enjoyed when I was at Otago University.

I continued to collect New Zealand art as funds allowed except for the years I was abroad. My particular focus was on the work of emerging artists. In 1992 I transferred the Collection to my newly formed charitable trust which I proceeded to fund so it could continue to add to the Collection and provide support for the Arts in general in New Zealand.

I have throughout continued to assist emerging artists both by patronage and promotion through exhibitions but as the Trust became more established its scope was broadened to include acquisitions of artists as they developed so creating a "diary collection".

Gaps were and are often filled through collaborations with artists and their dealers as well as by purchases at auctions. One of the greatest of these collaborations was with Toss Woollaston. Nothing is ever sold so the Trust does not indulge in evicting works from the Collection of artists who have not developed or emerged or are currently unfashionable. Accordingly that body of works, now numbering around 8,000 and growing at quite a substantial rate every year, will remain in its entirety as a cultural resource for present and future generations.

It follows that the works acquired for the Trust's Collection have documented the development of a New Zealand arts scene which has expanded and thrived exponentially through the years with a solid network of public collections and galleries, support and patronage programmes, private and corporate collectors, and dealer galleries all contributing to the promotion of exciting work by contemporary New Zealand artists.

Toss Woollaston, born in rural Taranaki in 1910, was a leader in the struggle to gain acceptance for modern art in New Zealand, through decades of persistent and determined work creating and promoting such art in a much more conservative environment for the arts than the lively and diverse one we enjoy today.

It was therefore a great pleasure to get to know Toss well and to work with him and with his representatives Peter McLeavey, Kerry Aberhart and Bronwen Marwick during 1995, in lengthy constructive negotiations to assemble a wonderful collection of 23 paintings and drawings for acquisition by the James Wallace Arts Trust. The financial commitment was huge at the time but I was given 5 years to pay off the purchase by quarterly instalments. The result of this memorable collaboration was a body of work which, in Toss's own words, was the most extensive representative

collection of his artworks held in any hands at that time. The Trust holds works from the artist's years of sporadic attendance at art schools in Canterbury and Otago in the early 1930s, through to his first mature works and the great portrait and panoramic landscape paintings of his triumphant later years. Through the chronological sequence of these works we can also witness key phases of his life, from earnest young painter, through the years of determined work and self-promotion, to his first successful dealer relationship with Peter McLeavey, his periods of set-back and self-renewal as new relationships and subjects are brought to life under the relentless analysis of his gaze and the fierce thrust of his brush.

Since 1995 the Trust has acquired many more works by Woollaston, including an unrivalled sequence of late portraits, culminating in the magnificent *Male Nude* of 1996, which is his last completed, signed oil painting.

One major work we missed out on is the superb painting of Rangitoto at the Northern Club. At the turn of this century an Arts Committee was formed at the Club to deal with the fact that it had no contemporary New Zealand art at all. As a member of the Committee I came to an arrangement with Peter McLeavey whereby that work would be offered to the Club on the basis that if it did not proceed with the purchase then the Wallace Arts Trust would do so. For a long time the members were very slow at committing the necessary funds but at the last minute they pre-empted our default purchase.

In 2015 the Trust acquired, from the Toss Woollaston Trust, a sequence of 80 paintings and drawings from the Erua series of figure and portrait studies made using a Maori schoolboy as the model. This extraordinary suite of mainly black and white studies using Indian ink, white paint, wash, pencil and white oil pastel (with a single coloured watercolour image), reveals how intensely Woollaston worked to develop his understanding and technical mastery when drawing the human figure. In the Erua sequence we can also witness the level of planning and analysis that underlies each of the many fine portraits by Woollaston we hold. As this catalogue was being prepared another surprise coup for the Collection occurred when the Trust acquired a very early Woollaston, *The Head of the Huinga Valley, Taranaki*, c. 1933, at auction. This important work has additional charm in the context of Woollaston's biography as it depicts the artist's home valley in Taranaki, where he grew up on a dairy farm.

In closing this brief foreword I would like to extend my grateful thanks to Philip Woollaston for his enthusiasm and warm kindness, both in assisting Oliver Stead to edit the extended essay introduction for this book and in facilitating permission for the Trust to reproduce his father's works in the Wallace Arts Trust Collection. Similarly I wish to sincerely thank Oliver Stead for his exhaustive research resulting in his erudite and highly informative editorial content, Ronald Winstone for contributing the magnificent new photographs and Sam Mannering for the awesome job he has done in steering this publication to fruition.

James Wallace
Rannoch
April 2015

RICH HARVEST

The Wallace Arts Trust Collection of works by
Sir Mountford Tosswill Woollaston

Oliver Stead

For most of my life I have known a desire to take some action to harvest the rich emotions that have come to me from landscape.

M T Woollaston, *The Far-away Hills*, 1962

I Toss Woollaston and James Wallace

In August 1995 the James Wallace Charitable Arts Trust and Toss Woollaston Ltd signed a landmark agreement enabling the Trust to acquire a superb collection of works of art by Sir Mountford Tosswill (Toss) Woollaston (1910-1998), then widely acknowledged as New Zealand's greatest living painter. The deal involved the purchase of 23 original paintings and drawings, representing high points in the artist's achievement over six decades of his career as a leading exponent of modern New Zealand painting, from 1931 to 1994. Following this magnificent acquisition the Trust would continue to acquire key works by the artist, including major late works, compiling what was then, in Woollaston's own assessment, the most comprehensive representation of his oeuvre held together in any single collection.

At the time of this historic accord Toss Woollaston was 85, and still painting strongly despite health challenges resulting from prostate cancer. Born in rural Taranaki in 1910, long and famously resident in the Nelson district, knighted in 1979 for services to art, Woollaston was the veteran of one of the longest, toughest and best-fought battles for recognition ever won by a New Zealand painter against the resistance of an ambivalent Kiwi public. Since the 1930s he had led the struggle to gain acceptance for modern art in New Zealand, and inspired several generations of new artists to follow his example. Toss was enthusiastic about the idea of assembling a truly representative selection of his life's work for the Wallace Arts Trust.

New Zealand agricultural and manufacturing entrepreneur, art collector and patron Sir James Wallace had made his very first art purchase in 1964, a dashing watercolour painting by Woollaston, **Otago Cob Cottage** (1964) (*Cat. no. 100*). The work reminded Wallace of his student days at the University of Otago. **Otago Cob Cottage** was the first acquisition in what would become the extraordinary Wallace Arts Trust Collection of modern and contemporary New Zealand art, which today numbers over 8000 individual works by New Zealand artists. The art collection that began as a private interest for Sir James eventually grew into an institution unlike any other. As his ventures in agribusiness flourished, Wallace found himself with the resources to invest significantly in the development of the arts in New Zealand. In 1992 he founded the Wallace Arts Trust as a charitable organisation for the benefit of all New Zealanders, to act as a vehicle for the growing Wallace art collection, and to facilitate many other activities supporting New Zealand art and artists.

The Wallace Arts Trust's primary ethos of encouraging the visual arts was epitomised in a flagship competition and annual event, the Wallace Art Awards. The Awards were launched simultaneously with the Trust itself in 1992. They soon became a premier event in the New Zealand arts calendar,

helping to establish the careers of many now famous New Zealand artists. High standards were set from the very beginning of the Awards. Mark Braunias was the first Paramount Award winner in 1992, followed by Jeff Brown (1993), Bill Hammond (1994), Fatu Feu'u (1995), Jenny Doležel (1996), Peter Stichbury (1997), and Elizabeth Thomson (1998). Every year the Wallace Arts Trust Collection acquired the major award-winning works as well as many works selected from among the finalists and from the Salon des Refusés which became a popular component of the Awards exhibition. Besides the annual Awards, throughout each year the Trust maintained an extremely active participation in New Zealand's network of artists, art schools, dealers and galleries, acquiring works especially from younger artists and providing a range of opportunities for artists to promote their work through commissions and exhibition projects. In time additions to the Wallace Arts Trust Collection would increase to the level of over five hundred works of art annually. Conceived by James Wallace as a 'diary collection', energetically acquiring new works by New Zealand artists, week by week, month by month, the Trust's acquisitions programme became the most active and thoroughly representative sampling of New Zealand contemporary art in existence. Sir James himself was awarded a knighthood in 2011 in recognition of his services to the arts.

In establishing the Wallace Art Trust in 1992 Wallace placed the growing collection on a sure footing and provided means by which it could continue to grow and realise his vision of supporting new talent through art acquisitions. With the collection now securely founded in the Trust, Wallace could turn his attention to some major retrospective acquisitions, to fill gaps in the collection where it seemed necessary to make a more complete representation of an artist's development. A project which had been in Wallace's mind for some time was the idea of acquiring a comprehensive and representative collection of the works of Toss Woollaston.

After a 30-year gap since his original purchase of **Otago Cobb Cottage** James Wallace returned to collecting works by Woollaston in 1994. By this time Woollaston was enjoying a hard-earned position as a celebrated and financially successful artist. Through the 1970s and '80s the painter had commanded high prices for his works and his position as a leading member of the modern art movement in New Zealand was undisputed. These factors had made collecting his works less of a priority for Wallace's collecting, which during this period was more focussed on the work of emerging artists. However by 1992, when Wallace formalised his collecting activity under the umbrella of the newly-formed Arts Trust, the relative lack of works by Woollaston in the Wallace Arts Trust Collection had become apparent, especially in view of Woollaston's leading contribution to establishing a viable environment for the appreciation of contemporary art in New Zealand. And in defiance of his advanced years Woollaston was continuing to develop his talent, producing works of remarkable vitality. Of the early leaders of modernism in New Zealand art, Woollaston was not only the most vital, he was among the last remaining. His near contemporary Rita Angus (1908-1970) had been dead for more than 20 years, while the younger Colin McCahon (1919-1987), who had been inspired to become a painter by seeing Woollaston's paintings in the 1930s, was more recently deceased. Gordon Walters (1919-1995) was Woollaston's junior by nearly ten years, Milan Mrkusch (b. 1925) by nearly fifteen. In 1992 Woollaston was still very much present. It was clear that an enhanced representation of his works would add greatly to the comprehensive record of New Zealand art that James Wallace was energetically compiling in the Wallace Arts Trust Collection.

Toss Woollaston's financial success through the 1970s and 1980s was largely achieved through the agency of his principal dealer, Peter McLeavey. Like James Wallace, McLeavey (b. 1936) had experienced his first inspiring encounter with Woollaston's paintings in the early 1960s. McLeavey's introduction to Woollaston's art came in 1963, when he visited a joint exhibition of Woollaston and Colin McCahon held at the Centre Gallery in Wellington.¹ The show, entitled *A Retrospective Exhibition: M.T. Woollaston, Colin McCahon*,² had been curated for the 1963 Auckland Festival by Auckland City Art Gallery director Peter Tomory (1922-2008). A Hong Kong-born, Scottish art historian and critic with an international reputation for his scholarship and critical writing, Tomory was a passionate advocate for the modernist painting of Woollaston and McCahon.³ Yet when approached by Tomory to be a venue for a national tour of the exhibition, the National Art Gallery in Wellington had snobbishly declined to host it. An alternative venue was found at the Centre Gallery, an exhibition space run by The Architectural Centre, a non-profit advocacy group of Wellington architects and artists. Due to lack of space the Centre Gallery had to show the paintings in instalments. Despite the National Gallery's cold shoulder treatment, the exhibition excited much public interest in Wellington, attracting a new generation of young art enthusiasts. For Peter McLeavey, then a shy insurance clerk making his first tentative explorations into the world of art, the exhibition brought on 'an epiphany'.⁴ Experiencing New Zealand landscapes through the paintings and vision of Woollaston and McCahon, he felt he 'saw the land for the first time'.⁵ The show opened his eyes to the potential of New Zealand art and he began to collect works by New Zealand artists, often making extended bus trips through the country to source works by far-flung artists. In May 1964 McLeavey, still more of a collector than an aspiring art dealer, set off on one of these trips for Greymouth, determined to track down Toss Woollaston, whose work had made such an impression on him. A cold call to Woollaston from the Brian Boru hotel in Greymouth led to a momentous first visit to the home of Toss and his wife Edith.

During the 1950s Woollaston had supported his family as a door-to-door salesman of Rawleigh's home products in the Greymouth area. While he continued to paint determinedly in every spare moment, the artist, then in his forties, had begun to despair of ever being able to establish himself securely and successfully as an artist. By the time of McLeavey's visit, despite some critical and official recognition, commercial success still eluded him and Woollaston was still dependent on the sales job. He was at that time working on a series of dramatic paintings of the Taramakau River, among them the Wallace Arts Trust's **Taramakau** (1962) (*Cat. no. 98*). The visit culminated in McLeavey buying one of the Taramakau works for 60 guineas.⁶ It was the beginning of a long and successful relationship. Within four years McLeavey would open the Peter McLeavey Gallery in Cuba Street, Wellington. Among his early triumphs as a dealer were several sales of paintings by Woollaston to the Department of External Affairs, to be hung in New Zealand's embassies and consular offices throughout the world. This built on earlier sales Woollaston had made to External Affairs through the advocacy of some enlightened diplomats. McLeavey's effective representation made it possible for Woollaston to continue painting full-time after he abandoned his Rawleigh's sales work in 1966,⁷ and he began to command good prices for his works. Official opinion continued to turn in Woollaston's favour. In 1969 he was one of several artists whose works were chosen to represent New Zealand art at the Expo 70 world exhibition, held in Japan. A new generation of art critics,

historians and writers now dominated critical opinion. To writers like Gordon Brown and Hamish Keith whose volume *An Introduction to New Zealand Painting: 1839-1967* was published by Collins in 1969,⁸ Woollaston was a revered figure, a respected leader and advocate for 'modern' art in New Zealand. They devoted a whole chapter each to Woollaston, Colin McCahon, and Patrick Hanly in their detailed account of developments in New Zealand art from the colonial era to the present. Woollaston's own energetic devotion to publishing letters and articles on contemporary art in New Zealand undoubtedly helped to influence the younger generation of art writers in the 1960s and '70s.

In 1971 Peter McLeavey entered into an exclusive dealing relationship with Woollaston.⁹ McLeavey's marketing genius was crucial in persuading Woollaston to expand his landscape paintings onto huge, 4 x 9 foot sheets of hardboard, to produce magnificent panoramas such as the Trust's **Tasman Bay** (1986) (*Cat. no. 115*).¹⁰ This series began in 1971 and gained Woollaston much public attention. Woollaston became McLeavey's top selling artist in the early '70s.¹¹ Even the conservative National Art Gallery stepped up its collecting of Woollaston in the 1970s, though its holdings continued to lag behind those of the Auckland Art Gallery and Hocken Library. Luit Bieringa, while Director of the Manawatu Art Gallery in Palmerston North, curated a touring exhibition of Woollaston in 1973. Entitled *M.T. Woollaston: works 1933-1973*, the exhibition was accompanied by a substantial catalogue, drawing on Bieringa's MA thesis research on Woollaston and McCahon.¹² The exhibition helped further to enhance Woollaston's critical reputation. In 1979 Bieringa was appointed Director of the National Art Gallery and began acquiring works by Woollaston to address the institution's previous neglect.

In 1979 Woollaston's achievement and contribution to the nation were recognised when he was made a Knight Bachelor for his services to art. The following year his frank and engaging autobiography, *Sage Tea*, was published by Collins in Auckland. The title came from the puritanical advice of Woollaston's mother Charlotte Woollaston, that her son should drink sage tea *after* his marriage, because it was 'good for chastity'.¹³ The publication of *Sage Tea* in no way signalled that Woollaston was ready to retire. Dealing with only the first 26 years of his life up to his marriage to Edith, the book was also an assertive personal manifesto, describing his efforts to emerge as an artist, while at the same time reasserting his determination to keep painting.

In the heady atmosphere of the post-1984 stock market boom, Woollaston's large-format landscape paintings were keenly sought by corporations seeking to enhance their image profiles through acquisitions of art works for boardroom and office spaces. Woollaston's paintings had great appeal in an optimistic New Zealand buoyed up by the bull market and by a new feeling of national assertiveness in the context of the country's anti-nuclear stance, which had sent ripples around the world. Art collecting by individuals also increased in the '80s. Many new collectors emerged, some of them very wealthy, as the idea of art as an appreciable investment gained currency, and by this time works by Woollaston had come to be viewed as 'blue chip' investments.

The lively art-buying activity of the mid-1980s took a plunge in the wake of the international stock market crash of 1987. While his reputation was now securely established, Woollaston still needed

to maintain an income. At the same time, following Edith Woollaston's death the same year, he was radically reassessing his artistic achievement and his painting was moving in new directions in response. While private buyers were comparatively thin on the ground after the crash, some of the major publicly-funded art collections were now beginning to address their neglect of Woollaston over previous years.

In 1991 a comprehensive survey exhibition, *Toss Woollaston: a retrospective*, opened at the National Art Gallery in Wellington. The stunning retrospective was dominated by a full complement of the dramatic large-scale landscape panoramas that Woollaston had become famous for in the 1970s and 1980s. It traced the development of his unique style, from his early days as an art student in Christchurch and Dunedin, through the long years of struggle in which he doggedly pursued his art while working to support his family as an orchard labourer in Mapua and then as a door-to-door salesman in Greymouth.

For gallery visitors new to Woollaston's work the scale, optimism and celebratory nature of his landscapes came as a breathtaking revelation. For long-term Woollaston enthusiasts the *Toss Woollaston: a retrospective* exhibition was a welcome affirmation of the artist's ground-breaking role in introducing modernist painting to New Zealand, from the 1930s through to the present. The show touched a national chord of appreciation for the artist's achievement. Ironically perhaps, it also demonstrated how far art appreciation had come in New Zealand since Woollaston had held his first one-man exhibition, in Dunedin, in 1936. In the now well-established public exhibition environment of the early 1990s, saturated with contemporary post-object art and installations, his art could even be regarded as conservative. Toss himself was amused by this irony: as early as 1968 he had commented wryly that 'my work was considered too modern for the 1930s, but for today it could be too old-fashioned'.¹⁴ But by any standards the retrospective demonstrated the giant contribution Woollaston had made to the emergence of a credible contemporary art tradition in New Zealand. It was accompanied by an impressive publication, *Toss Woollaston: an illustrated biography*, meticulously researched and written by Gerald Barnett.¹⁵ Attracting large audiences and appreciative reviews throughout the country, *Toss Woollaston: a retrospective* toured major metropolitan galleries around New Zealand following its successful season at the National Art Gallery. However, while doing much to expose Woollaston's achievement to the nation, the exhibition still left periods and aspects of the artist's practice under-represented. This was especially true of Woollaston's more recent works, in particular his portraiture which was entering a vigorous new phase after Edith Woollaston's death.

To assemble a full survey of the artist's work for the 1991 retrospective the National Art Gallery had been obliged to borrow large numbers of works from regional public collections and also from private lenders, to supplement its own holdings of Woollaston. The gallery had not begun to collect Woollaston until 1966, lagging behind other regional art galleries such as Auckland City Art Gallery and the Manawatu Art Gallery (now Te Manawa), whose directors had been so much more proactive in supporting and collecting works by Woollaston in the 1960s. Of the major regional collections, Auckland Art Gallery and the Hocken Library in Dunedin had considerably more extensive representations of Woollaston than the National Art Gallery. Indeed, despite Luit Bieringa's efforts

to acquire exemplary works by Woollaston in the 1980s, the 1991 *Toss Woollaston: a retrospective* exhibition represented a belated recognition of the artist's contribution by the organisation. At the end of the touring show the survey selection would be dispersed to its various owners: a truly representative collection of Woollaston's works would still not be held together in one location for the enjoyment and interest of the New Zealand public.

Alert to the evident gap in the representation of Woollaston's oeuvre among New Zealand art collections, James Wallace was interested in making a thorough collection of Woollaston for the Wallace Art Trust Collection, where the works could be held together in perpetuity as a lasting testament and record of Woollaston's contribution to New Zealand art. The practicalities of such a project would be challenging. Prices on the secondary market for Woollastons remained high, despite a general drop in prices on the New Zealand art market following the international stock market crash of 1987. Renewed public interest and attention had been stimulated by the National Art Gallery's touring Woollaston retrospective, helping to boost demand for the painter's works.

At the same time it would be difficult to source enough suitable works to demonstrate in a single collection the full scope of the artist's vision, and the variety of media and means of expression he had evolved to realise it, covering over six decades of sustained and at times prolific practice. A comprehensive selection of key examples of the painter's development would need careful curation by the artist and the collector. It would also require tactful negotiations between Woollaston's company, Toss Woollaston Ltd, (which managed his business affairs), and his dealers, as well as other potential vendors. For the sake of completeness it would be just as important to include very early sketches and student exercises as recently completed masterpieces.

In the late 1980s Peter McLeavey had decided that Woollaston needed representation in Auckland and Christchurch besides Wellington. A close associate of both Peter McLeavey and Toss Woollaston was Kerry Aberhart, brother of the photographer Laurence Aberhart (who had often photographed Toss). Together with his partner Lorraine North, Aberhart ran the progressive Aberhart North Gallery in College Hill Road, Auckland. With its strongly contemporary edge, Aberhart North was selected to represent Woollaston in Auckland. Bronwen Marwick of the Loft Gallery in Motueka had also represented Woollaston since 1985, and was working towards opening the gallery in Christchurch. The Loft Gallery would represent Woollaston in Christchurch.¹⁶

In 1995 Marwick organised a touring exhibition of works by Woollaston which ran at Timaru's public art gallery, the Aigantighe Art Gallery, from January to March of that year. Several of the works now in the Wallace Arts Trust Collection were featured in this exhibition, entitled *Woollaston 1931-1994: a survey exhibition of paintings and drawings by Sir Toss Woollaston courtesy of the Loft Gallery Christchurch*. These included the early **Figure Drawing**, 1931, (*Cat. no. 1*) dating from Woollaston's brief time as an art student at Canterbury College School of Art. With Woollaston's assistance, Rodney Palmer, a recent art history graduate, compiled the editorial content for the exhibition. James Wallace was visiting the artist Philip Trusstum in Timaru at the time of the Aigantighe exhibition and was introduced to Marwick by Trusstum. It was in this context that the idea of the Wallace Arts Trust acquiring a significant collection of works by Woollaston arose. By the



Toss Woollaston and Kerry Aberhart at John Leech Gallery, Auckland, 1996. Photograph by John Gow.

time the historic deal between Wallace and Woollaston was concluded nine months later, Rodney Palmer had been recruited by Wallace as a Director of the Wallace Arts Trust, and was a signatory to the acquisition agreement that eventuated.

Once the idea of assembling a selection of Woollastons for the Wallace Arts Trust Collection was floated it became a matter of equal importance to the collector, the artist, and his representatives that the resulting list of works be truly representative, covering six decades of Woollaston's output from the 1930s to the present. Together, the collector, the artist and his dealers managed to identify and source an outstanding selection of works. The agreement concluded between the parties provided for the James Wallace Charitable Arts Trust to purchase a total of 23 paintings and drawings from Toss Woollaston Ltd. The artist's company was then responsible for reconciling its accounts with the three dealers. As the Trust's files show, Peter McLeavey acted in the role of principal dealer, with responsibility for 'brokering' the deal.¹⁷ Payments by the Trust would be staggered over five years, with the final payment due in 2000.

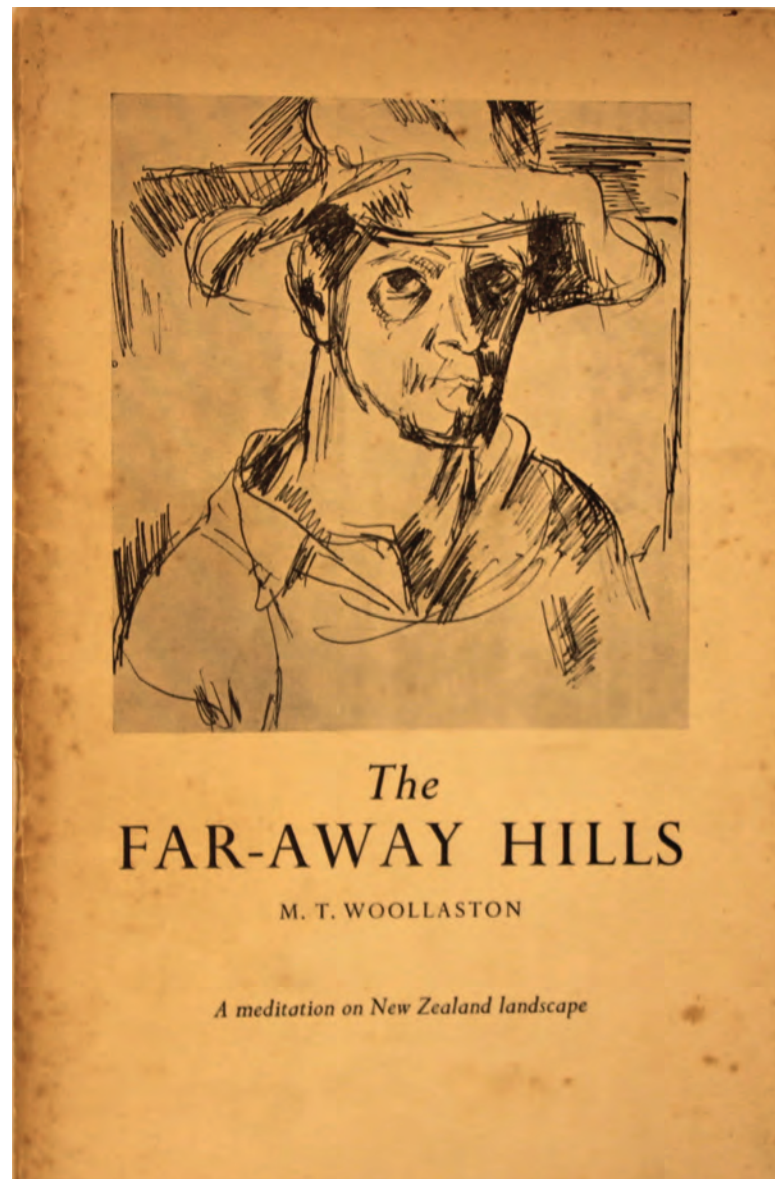
Right: Toss Woollaston on top of Mount Eden, mid 1990's.
Photographs by Kerry Aberhart



The works acquired in the 1995 agreement were:

Figure Drawing	1931	ink on paper	250 x 180 mm
Mapua	1934	oil on canvas	475 x 620 mm
Gramophone	1936	ink on paper	260 x 200 mm
Mrs Hugh Scott	c. 1939	graphite on paper	255 x 190 mm
Mapua	1946	watercolour on paper	220 x 290 mm
Greymouth	c. 1950	oil on card	430 x 570 mm
Tasman Bay/verso Prisoners of War	c. 1956	oil on card	560 x 895 mm
Erua	c. 1962	indian ink on paper	360 x 260 mm
Lyttelton Harbour	1970-75	oil on board	960 x 1200 mm
The Remarkables	1974	watercolour on paper	270 x 360 mm
Jeremy Classen	1975	watercolour on card	750 x 490 mm
Self-Portrait	1976	oil on board	760 x 500 mm
Tasman Bay	1986	oil on board	1200 x 2600 mm
Nude Woman	1986	oil on board	630 x 410 mm
Woman with Necklace	1989	oil on board	1200 x 1610 mm
Tasman Bay	1991	oil on canvas	900 x 1200 mm
Rangitoto	1990	watercolour	210 x 295 mm
Pah Hill with Half Moon	1992	oil on board	760 x 980 mm
Lake Placid and Mrs Macey	1992	oil on canvas	850 x 1170 mm
Blue Stephen	1990	oil on canvas	1230 x 923 mm
Rembrandt's Mother	1993	oil on board	690 x 600 mm
Mt Arthur	1995	oil on canvas	900 x 1210 mm

A notable feature of the 1995 list is the number of highly significant portraits and figure studies included, making up a balanced selection in which Woollaston's achievements as a painter of people could be appreciated alongside his more widely recognised accomplishments as a landscape painter. Early drawings for portraits and figure studies were included as well as a representative example of the long series of **Erua** drawings of 1961-62 (*Cat. no. 16*). The **Self-Portrait** in oil of 1976 (*Cat. no. 111*) was a crucial inclusion, as this was based on an important self-portrait drawing of the early 1940s, now in the Hocken Library collection



MT Woollaston, *The Far-away Hills*, Auckland, 1962, Cover.

The Hocken drawing was conceived as a representation of the artist as Vincent van Gogh, with specific reference to van Gogh's *Self-Portrait with a Straw Hat* (1887), in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Emblematic of Toss's personal struggle and triumph, the **Self-Portrait** acquisition was a special coup for the Wallace Arts Trust, as self-portraits by Woollaston are comparatively rare. **The Nude Woman** (1986) (*Cat. no. 114*), **Woman with Necklace** (1989) (*Cat. no. 118*), **Blue Stephen** (1990) (*Cat. no. 119*), **Lake Placid with Mrs Macey** (1992) (*Cat. no. 122*), and **Rembrandt's Mother** (1993) (*Cat. no. 127*), each a powerful work in its own right, also showed as a sequence that at this late stage of his career Woollaston had entered an intense new phase of engagement with people as subjects for his painting. The new phase reflected profound changes in the artist's lifestyle after the death of Edith Woollaston in 1987. In 1993 he sold the Riwaka property where he had lived for twenty-four years and, with his secretary Stephen Lockett, purchased a small orchard in Upper Moutere. He was also spending extended periods living in the United States in the company of his close friend Anne Martindell, the former US senator and ambassador to New Zealand whom Toss had first met in 1980. The magnificent **Mt Arthur** (1995) (*Cat. no. 129*) sees Woollaston achieving a pinnacle of atmospheric vision, effortlessly compressing the most dramatic and essential aspects of this grand alpine vista into the 900 x 1210 mm picture frame.

Toss travelled to Auckland to open the exhibition *Woollaston: 1931-1995* at the Wallace Arts Trust's gallery in Auckland's Old Customs House in November 1995. The exhibition generated considerable interest in the media and Toss gave several interviews, rather wearing himself out in the process. In a lively and candid interview with Linda Herrick in the *Sunday Star Times*, 3 December 1995), Toss talked about his early struggles against conservative attitudes.¹⁸ The Wallace Arts Trust made an extended video recording of Toss talking about his work during this visit.

Acquisitions by the Wallace Arts Trust after 1995

James Wallace's enthusiasm for Woollaston's art remained undiminished in the wake of the great acquisition of 1995. Other acquisitions were waiting in the wings that would bring the Wallace Arts Trust's collection of Woollastons entirely up to date, and would help to address gaps in the collection. The Trust continued to acquire works by the artist after his death in 1998, adding an unrivalled collection of late masterpieces to its now substantial holdings of Woollaston. These later acquisitions include a number of major portraits, among them **Woman Reading** (1990) (*Cat. no. 120*), depicting Lorraine North, **Sheila Buchan at the Piano** (1978) (*Cat. no. 112*), and two extraordinary double portraits, **Double Portrait (Mycenae Period Object and Zarn Aberhart)** (1987) (*Cat. no. 116*) and **Dual Portrait** (1995) (*Cat. no. 128*). Both of the latter works have very strong autobiographical content, especially revealing in the way they show the artist in the act of making self-appraisals in the closing phases of his long career. Perhaps the most emblematic of the late works is the 1996 **Male Nude** (*Cat. no. 130*) – the last documented completed, signed work by Woollaston. While he had painted figure subjects throughout his life Woollaston rarely painted the nude male. This vital painting shows the undiminished vigour with which the artist was painting almost to the end of his life.

Two significant additions to the Wallace Arts Trust holdings of Woollaston came in 2013 when the

Trust entered into a custodial arrangement to hold and administer the Rutherford Trust Collection of New Zealand art works.¹⁹ This magnificent collection is in the process of being gifted to the Wallace Arts Trust. Among the masterpieces in the Rutherford Trust Collection were Woollaston's École de Paris-flavoured **Window on Greymouth** (1959) (*Cat. no. 13*), and his sensational **Kina from Harley Road** (1993) (*Cat. no. 126*), a compelling later landscape in which unusual cloud formations create an especially dramatic effect.

In 2014 the Wallace Arts Trust Collection of Woollastons was further augmented with the acquisition from the Toss Woollaston Trust of 80 works on paper, comprising the majority of the **Erua** series of images (*Cat. nos. 17-96*). The **Erua** sequence of pen, ink and wash drawings was the product of an intense study of figure composition from the live model made by Woollaston over two years between 1961 and 1963, using a young Maori schoolboy as a life model. The **Erua** series is discussed in detail in Part III of this essay.

In April 2015 the Trust achieved another exciting Woollaston acquisition with the addition of **The Head of the Huinga Valley, Taranaki** (c. 1933) (*Cat. no. 2*) to the Wallace Arts Trust Collection. Likely painted towards the end of 1933 when the 23-year-old artist was living and working at the home of the Arthur family in Ratanui, New Plymouth, this delightful work is especially interesting as it shows the Huinga Valley where Toss's parents had lived and worked as sharemilkers when he was born, before they were able to buy their own farm, at nearby Toko, in 1918. **The Head of the Huinga Valley** is doubly emblematic of Woollaston's art and life in that it shows the setting of his earliest years, and at the same time belongs among his first successful realisations of the childhood vision of 'the far-away hills', a vision that he sustained throughout his long career.

II Early years 1910 - 1935

*Art seemed to be a rather remote and gentle affair for mothers and children in the house on wet days, but not noticed by men in our world.*²⁰

Mountford Toss will Woollaston was born into a farming family and grew up on dairy farms in Taranaki. At the time of his birth on 11 April 1910 his parents, John Reginald Woollaston (1880-1976) and Charlotte Kathleen Frances Woollaston (née Toss will – 1887-1942) were sharemilkers at Huinga. When Toss was eight they were able to buy their own farm, at Toko, achieving economic independence by virtue of their hard labours and thrift. Toss was the eldest of five brothers. In the days before mechanised milking the whole family was required to help manually milk the cows in the early morning before school, and again in the evening. The discipline of a lifestyle dependent on hard physical work was complemented by a rigorous code of moral behaviour imparted through the parents' staunch adherence to the Anglican faith. In Charlotte Woollaston this faith took a strongly puritanical form, leavened by her equally passionate interest in music and poetry. She was an accomplished pianist and a devotee of Romantic poetry.

Like many farming families in New Zealand the Woollastons balanced the relentlessly physical demands of their calling with more intellectual pursuits in the evenings. Rather touchingly John Woollaston bought books as presents for Charlotte and the children, which did much to sustain Charlotte's artistic leanings and to broaden the imaginative horizons of the children. Toss proved very receptive to books, and especially to illustrations. He experienced a powerful response to two paintings reproduced in Arthur Mee's *The Children's Encyclopaedia*,²¹ which came into the house in instalments: a portrait by Cézanne, *Self-Portrait with a Beret*, 1898-99,²² and a landscape by Sisley, *Chemin montant au Mont Valérien*, 1880.²³ The memory of these two more-or-less Impressionist images was indelibly impressed on his visual imagination, and he remained true to the aesthetic values they imparted to him in every aspect of his subsequent career as a painter.

At five Woollaston started primary school and was introduced to paints. An acutely nervous child, after his first year at school his parents decided he should have a year off. During this time his mother encouraged him to paint and he discovered the joy of sketching outside. He recalled an experience of drawing willow leaves beside a river bank, not from observation, but from memory.²⁴ Notwithstanding his strong response to pictures, Toss's love of language emerged as the dominant passion of his childhood and teens. His first published work appeared in the *Taranaki Daily News Christmas Supplement* on 18 December 1920. Toss had entered into the Junior Competitions for writing. The subject set for the competitors was 'Most Interesting Day of My Life'. 'A Day at the Show' by Toss will Woollaston, Raupuha School, Toko, aged 10½, won a Special Prize. Toss's entry is shorter than some of the other winning pieces, but rather more succinct. Describing a trip to an agricultural show day the young writer displays a droll talent for combining the prosaic with the fantastical.²⁵

The most interesting day of my life was Show Day. As the day was fine we enjoyed it very much. I got up very early that morning, and milked as fast as I could, so that I might get

away early and have a longer day. About 8.30 am I started off in the gig with my father and my two brothers. We had eleven miles to drive with a slow horse, so that it took us nearly two hours to get there. When I arrived I first went to look at the sheep, pigs, and cattle. I saw some very large sheep. The champion stood about 2 feet 6 inches high; it was very fat, and to make it look bigger it had not been shorn this year. After that I went to see the side shows. The first of these was a very curious thing indeed. It was a fowl which had two bodies, one head and four legs, which it did not need, as it only used two. These four legs were all different kinds: one was an eagle's leg, another was a pheasant's leg, another a peacock's leg, and the other was a turkey's leg. The next thing to see was a dear little teddy bear, which was alive, and though so much money was taken to see this dear little animal, it was only an Australian bear. After that I had some ice creams and a few lollies. Then I had a ride on the merry-go-round, and had my lunch. In the afternoon I did hardly anything, except look for my father, and when I found him it was time to go home and milk, which was the end of my happy day.

Inspired by his mother's love of poetry and recital Toss also began to compose verse. Yet despite his precocious writing and intellectual tendencies, his academic performance was miserable. He failed even to matriculate from high school. Inclined to wander off both mentally and physically, Toss's vagaries frustrated his parents and teachers alike, and he acquired the reputation of being a 'waster' – a shameful label. He wanted to be a poet, not a farmer. In a rural society where the primary virtues of hard physical work and constructive activity needed to be seen to be credible, Toss's habit of disappearing, to be alone with his thoughts and to stare at the far-away hills, was evidence of a reprehensible idleness. Yet the boy's character proved too strong to be crushed into conformity by such judgements. Confident of his own physical strength he felt no need to prove himself in that direction. He had learned very early in life that he could milk more quickly than his brothers, and also that he could contrive not to work too hard, leaving himself more time to think. On the other hand he seems to have genuinely desired to communicate with an audience at an early stage of his intellectual development and, more unusually, to have evolved a sense of the moral obligation to produce work in order to earn the audience's attention. The basement rock of Toss's emerging personality seems to have been an extreme optimism. He took his academic failure calmly and with no professional prospects decided to go fruit-picking in the Nelson region, hoping to find in seasonal labour the space between seasons to entertain his poetic ambitions.

Toss arrived in Nelson in 1928. Though connexions of his parents he found an employer, and immediately negotiated an arrangement whereby he would be allowed time off to write poetry. When this arrangement proved unworkable he simply found another employer. In Nelson Toss began to show the ability to navigate through the world of ideas – thinly spread as it was over New Zealand's rural landscape – which would enable him to operate outside convention, and as it were over the heads of his detractors, to take a leading position in the development of art in the country. A brief fling with lay preaching in the Presbyterian Church was terminated by an even more enthusiastic participation in the local Sketch Club. This led to an acquaintance with the Scott family. Hugh Scott was Nelson's unofficial art critic and ran an art studio in town. Scott provided Woollaston's first formal lessons in composition and painting. He also encouraged him to go to

Christchurch, to enrol in the Canterbury College School of Art. 'Thus was begun', wrote Toss, 'what became the regular pattern of my life for the next few years: back to Mapua for the fruit season, and away again to be an art-student for a short period: the rest of the year eked out with occasional jobs: on a dairy farm at Lower Moutere; casual gardening in Christchurch; door-to-door selling in Dunedin; and, of course, almost annual return to Taranaki'.²⁶ Riding to Christchurch on a bicycle Toss arrived in the city in 1931.

In Christchurch Toss's unusual navigational instincts enabled him to find his way into the centre of the intellectual life of the city. A search for gardening work brought him to the door of the poet Ursula Bethell (1874-1945), a New Zealander by birth who had spent many years in England before the First World War. Bethell recognised her young gardener's intellectual interests and provided many valuable insights into the contemporary arts of distant Europe, as well as crucial introductions to practicing artists and writers. At the same time Toss received 'explosive stimulation' from the 1931 exhibition of the Christchurch 'Group' of contemporary artists.²⁷ At the Group Show, held that year at the Durham Street Art Gallery, Toss was profoundly impressed by the paintings of two artists, Christopher Perkins (1891-1968) and Robert Nettleton Field (1899-1987). Perkins and Field had come to New Zealand from England under the La Trobe scheme which had been organised by the government's Department of Education.²⁸ The scheme provided for professionally trained artists from England to be brought to New Zealand to teach fine art in the nation's leading academies. A vitally important aspect of this visionary scheme was that the English artists should be trained in the most up-to-date methodologies and practices. Responding to the brilliant use of pure colour he saw in Field's work Woollaston determined to become his pupil. He was frustrated with the ponderous and conservative style of teaching he found in the Canterbury art school, where students were normally only permitted to draw from the nude model in their third year, after enduring many repetitive formal exercises. The **Figure Drawing** of 1931 in the Wallace Arts Trust Collection (*Cat. no. 1*) is an example of one such exercise – the model's genitals are modestly covered. Ever ready to negotiate a better deal, Woollaston sought and obtained special permission to attend the nude classes earlier, on the basis that his dependence on seasonal work made his continuation uncertain. However this dispensation was not enough to hold him in Canterbury.

After returning to Mapua for another season of fruit-picking Woollaston again cycled southwards, this time to Dunedin, where Robert Field was teaching at the Dunedin Art School.²⁹ Dunedin in the 1930s provided an accessible concentration of artists and writers, and Toss found himself on friendly turf:

Dunedin in 1932 was the most artistically enlightened place in New Zealand. They were looking at artists unheard of in Christchurch – Matisse, Picasso, Cézanne and others of the French; and English ones like Matthew Smith, Mark Gertler, Roger Fry, and the New Zealand-born Frances Hodgkins. The one quality that united all these painters was excitement. And here, it seemed right to be excited. It was a radiant atmosphere kept bright by a few and shining over many.³⁰

Woollaston enrolled under Field and once more quickly found himself at the centre of an

intellectually adventurous group. Field convened a group of students called the 'Six and Four' (in homage to the Seven and Five Society in London which included the Dunedin-born Frances Hodgkins as well as leading English Modernists Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth). Among the young artists Woollaston met at Dunedin Art School was Rodney Kennedy (1909-1989). While Kennedy's parents were not well off his uncle had a farm on which Kennedy was able to work for additional income, and his family was not antagonistic towards his intellectual interests. The fact that Kennedy had been a victim of poliomyelitis before the War probably further excused his artistic inclinations. So began one of the most important and enduring relationships of Woollaston's personal life, as he found in the young Kennedy a kindred spirit, one who was not bound by convention and who had the imaginative freedom to understand, respect and encourage Toss in his efforts to generate a modern style of painting, appropriate to the New Zealand setting. Diminutive and rather gawky, Kennedy proved an affectionate and faithful co-conspirator against the forces of convention, coming to occupy a central position in the Dunedin artistic scene that would continue for decades to come. His 1939 portrait by Woollaston in the Wallace Arts Trust Collection (*Cat. no. 6*) captures the strangely infant-like proportions of Kennedy's figure, and demonstrates the Cézanne-inspired approach to figures which Toss developed further under the tutelage of Field. Field himself was especially encouraging and Woollaston found his advice somewhat startling to begin with. Asking after the proper way to achieve a certain effect, Woollaston was told that there was no proper way – the artist, in Field's view, had to find his or her own path to artistic expression.³¹

When Woollaston's funds ran out in 1933 he left Dunedin. Returning to Taranaki towards the end of the year he made a brief attempt to set himself up as a private art tutor, and when that failed, found employment and accommodation with the family of Mr and Mrs N Arthur in Ratanui, a suburb on the outskirts of New Plymouth. Mr Arthur's wife Maire was very encouraging of Toss's drawing and painting. Toss made drawings of the Arthurs' twin sons, one of which is now in the Hocken Library Collection. He also made several finished landscapes which demonstrate growing confidence and sophistication in the wake of his formal art school training at Christchurch and Dunedin, as well as the immediate influence of W H Allen (1894-1988). Allen, like R N Field and Christopher Perkins, had come to New Zealand from England to teach art, arriving in Dunedin in 1925. Toss was enthusiastic about Allen's painting and wrote to Rodney Kennedy from the Arthurs' address about the English artist.³² **The Head of the Huinga Valley, Taranaki**, (c. 1933) (*Cat. no. 2*) was acquired by Maire Arthur around the time of Toss's stay with the Arthur family, and may have been painted by him while staying there. The influence of W H Allen can be seen in the work's efficient analysis of the essential topography in clearly defined planes, and its schematic use of colour to define the 'far-away hills'. The setting of the Huinga Valley where Toss spent the early years of his childhood lends additional charm to the work. As Toss's letters to Rodney Kennedy reveal, he greatly enjoyed his time with the Arthur family, who were refreshingly free from the stifling conservatism he was used to encountering in Taranaki. Maire Arthur read D H Lawrence, chatted freely about sex, and was a 'great inciter' of Toss's painterly interests and ambitions.³³

Early in 1934 Toss went back to Mapua to work for an orchardist, Decimus Wells, for whom he had worked prior to his time in Dunedin. Toss was friendly with the 'Deci Wells' family and this season he invited Rodney Kennedy to join him picking apples on the Wells' orchard. He had also

asked Deci Wells to let him build a studio from hand-made clay bricks on the property. Wells agreed on the basis that the studio could double as extra accommodation for temporary fruit-pickers. Toss made the large mud bricks himself, building a serviceable one-roomed structure in which to live and paint. 'But it has space!' was Rodney Kennedy's exclamation when he arrived to stay.³⁴ After Kennedy returned to Dunedin at the end of the fruit-picking season Woollaston, in typically determined fashion, set about beating a path to the door of a reclusive Nelson artist, Miss Flora Scales (1887-1985). He had first encountered paintings by Scales at the house of her sister, a Mrs Reeves, in Christchurch, and had learned more about her from Ursula Bethell.³⁵ Scales had studied art in Germany at Hans Hofmann's School of Fine Arts in Munich, renowned for its progressive teaching. Hoping to acquire further insight into the methods of contemporary modernist painting, Woollaston persuaded the reluctant Scales to pass on to him something of what she had learned in Germany. Although Scales only allowed Toss five sessions of tuition, the impact of her guidance and explanations was profound. Always fascinated by reproductions of Cézanne, Woollaston felt that he was now seeing Cézanne 'with the beginning of understanding'.³⁶ Scales practiced the so called 'push-pull' approach to perspective and colour in her landscape painting. Conventional linear and atmospheric perspective methods were abandoned in this methodology. Instead the optical effects of opposing primaries were exploited so that one patch of colour appeared to project outwards from the canvas while adjacent colours seemed to recede.

It seemed this might produce crudeness of colour but if subtly and carefully handled it would produce glowing harmonies instead, colours of an intensity completely unavailable within the concept of nature-copying – as in a painting of her own Miss Scales showed me, done from the hill above Tahunanui, in which there were reds in the hills...that amazed me. It was as if the distance had come up close yet was still distant. It was extraordinarily exciting...My own work now appeared flat and weak. In Miss Scales' work I noticed the strength of the feeling of space – 'overthereness', I called it in my mind...Distant objects fully grasped and powerfully drawn emphasised the feeling of space far more than their pale visual remnants could in naturalistic drawing.³⁷

The five sessions with Flora Scales initiated the most important stage in Woollaston's stylistic development. The revelations of Scales' lessons set him off on a path of discovery as, over the next few years, he used her suggested techniques to explore the long vistas of Mapua in a wholly new manner. Numerous studies resulted, and several highly finished works intended for sale and exhibition. Foremost of these was the work **Mapua** (1934) which Toss also called **Landscape in Purple** (*Cat. no. 3*). This was the first fully realised application by Woollaston of the Hofmann-inspired techniques imparted to him by Scales. Though he was later critical of some of the formal aspects of the work, which he found somewhat stiff and self-conscious in retrospect, at the time he was especially proud of it. He described the painting enthusiastically in letters to Rodney Kennedy,³⁸ and in 1935 entered it into the Nelson Art Society show with the bullish price tag of 100 guineas or £105. The price attracted a sarcastic comment in the local newspaper.³⁹

Flora Scales had let Toss read her lecture notes from the Hofmann School, and through these notes he discovered a further source of intelligence about colour: the writings of Wilhelm Ostwald.

Ostwald (1853-1932) was a German chemist who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1909.⁴⁰ Besides his pioneering work in electrochemistry Ostwald was fascinated by colour theory, and published several works on the subject in his later years. In the early 1930s the English art supplies company Winsor & Newton published an English translation of Ostwald's *Colour Science* by John Scott Taylor.⁴¹ Toss lost no time in sending to England for this work. He describes his response to it in great detail in *Sage Tea*:

In the Hofmann School lecture notes I had come across a reference to a book on colour science by Wilhelm Ostwald, in which the exciting thing for me was the discovery of the difference between mixing complementaries and light-complementaries. Defining 'complementaries' as a pair of colours whose mixture will give neutral grey, Ostwald had found that the pairs are different for pigment-mixing and light-mixing. Light mixing was done by rapidly spinning pieces of different-coloured materials on a wheel, or by looking through dyed liquids in glass wedges. In pigment-mixing, as we know, yellow and blue give green; but in light-mixing middle yellow and middle blue will give grey.

We don't know this from experience, as light-mixing is inaccessible to most of us. I took Ostwald's word for it. I had sent to England for his books in 1935 – two volumes translated into English by Winsor & Newton's Mr Scott-Taylor. They cost thirty shillings, a big price for two books in those days, but I felt it was a worthwhile investment. I had no hesitation in spending the money. I was in Taranaki when they came, and Mother, impressed with the quality of the knowledge that came from my reading, advised me to keep them from other people's eyes so that I could sell the knowledge in the form of teaching...An intellectual device for procuring different kinds of harmoniously contrasting colours was given by Ostwald in his book – namely, equality of interval; interval being the amount of difference between two colours.⁴²

Woollaston goes on to comment, 'that I am an artist, and a peculiar one, not the theory itself, is why I have chosen to work in variations of a certain few colours'. In this statement Woollaston reveals the core discipline of his practice, which he sustained throughout his long career without deviation. Though he was often criticised for his unusual colour sensibility, which was apparently characterised as 'Mapua mud' by one writer,⁴³ the passages from *Sage Tea* quoted above show the depth of theoretical knowledge and discipline that underlies all of Woollaston's practice from 1935 onwards.

III Hard years 1936-1964

After two years of hard work refining his painting in the manner of Flora Scales, Woollaston felt he had enough work to mount his first one-man show. Rodney Kennedy helped facilitate the project, finding vacant rooms in Broadway, a street below Rattray Street on the south side of Dunedin's city centre, in which to mount the exhibition of paintings and drawings. **Mapua** (or **Landscape in Purple**) (1934) (*Cat. no. 3*) featured prominently in the selection. While hardly a success in terms of sales the exhibition did succeed in attracting attention – some negative and some positive. Woollaston's former teacher and mentor R N Field purchased a work, as did Ivy Copeland, a teacher at Dunedin's teacher training college. But Toss's first show would eventually prove to have made more of an impact than anyone realised at the time, as it was through visiting the exhibition that the young Colin McCahon, still in his teens, was inspired to pursue a career as an artist. Another young artist, Edith Alexander, helped Toss and Rodney Kennedy to arrange the exhibition. Five years older than Toss, Edith was a Canterbury College-trained artist and talented draughtswoman, employed as an illustrator at the University of Otago Medical School. Her family were Scottish and middle class, her father the chief engineer for the City of Dunedin. When Edith Alexander accepted Toss's proposal of marriage later that year he gave her the **Landscape in Purple** as an engagement present, in lieu of a ring. Richly emblematic of Toss's emergence as a new force in New Zealand painting, the painting remained in Edith's possession until her death in 1987.

Edith accompanied Toss on his return to Mapua after their marriage in 1936. On the way they stayed in Christchurch, where Toss reconnected with old friends from the artistic scene, among them the musician Valmai Moffett, who appears with her portable record player in the charming drawing called **Gramophone** (1936) (*Cat. no. 4*).⁴⁴

The couple took up residence in the mud-brick studio on the Deci Wells property. They continued to live there until 1949, raising four children in spartan conditions. Woollaston had regular orcharding work around which he fitted his painting and writing activities. In 1939 he got a permanent job on an orchard which exempted him from war service. While much has been made of the straightened circumstances under which the Woollastons lived at Mapua, the young family was spared the frightful possibility of losing Toss in active service overseas. As an outspoken pacifist in his youth, he was doubly lucky to be exempted from military service in World War II, for his pacifism would undoubtedly have caused him and his young family a great deal of trouble if he had had to fight a personal campaign to be exempted. Rodney Kennedy stuck to his pacifist guns and was imprisoned for the duration, despite the fact that his medical status as a survivor of polio would have exempted him automatically.⁴⁵ Toss was certainly heavily committed to orchard work during the war, and the Wallace Arts Trust Collection does not include any works from these busy years. But a striking pencil portrait, **Mrs Hugh Scott** (1939) (*Cat. no. 5*) shows the analytical approach to portraiture that was evolving rapidly in his work just before the war. The rather grim expression and facial architecture revealed in this study typify Woollaston's refusal to make concessions to conventional prettiness. The severity of his vision is revealed in its search for essential character, in psychological as well as formal terms. While **Mrs Hugh Scott** owes something to Picasso's interest in the forms of 'primitive' sculpture, the oil on card portrait of **Rodney Kennedy** (1939) (*Cat. no. 6*)

is conceived in a thoroughly Cézannesque manner, with the individual characteristics of the model subordinated to transient effects of colour, light and shadow. Throughout the war years, while heavily committed to his orchard employment and the needs of his growing family, Woollaston continued to apply himself to painting the Mapua landscape over and over, in all its moods, working out of doors whenever possible in a long succession of drawings, watercolour and oil sketches in support of more highly finished oils. The facility he developed during these tough years can be gauged in the deft brushstrokes and acute colour sensibility of the watercolour **Mapua** (1946) (*Cat. no. 7*).

After thirteen years and four children, life in the clay cottage at Mapua at last became too difficult for the Woollastons and they bought a house in Mapua in 1949. By this time Toss had given up his orcharding job. After working for a while in an agricultural chemicals factory he briefly tried his hand at house-painting.⁴⁶ However conversations with the local Rawleigh's door-to-door salesman led to Toss investigating opportunities with the company, and in 1949 he took up a Rawleigh's sales role in Greymouth, moving his family there. It was by no means his first experience of door-to-door sales. Accustomed from early childhood to the commercial realities of farming, he was a natural salesman. He had earned money as a youth in Taranaki and Dunedin hawking products from door to door. And he appreciated the personal freedom this form of employment might allow him – giving him time to think, to write, and to paint, and it appealed to his strong sense of independence. Sadly the reality was rather different, the long hours required to earn enough to support his family leaving little time and less energy for painting throughout the early 1950s. It was excellent training, however, for the salesmanship required to promote his art as he continued to hold on tightly to the goal of eventually becoming a full-time, successful painter, earning his living through sales of his works.

Greymouth provided the opportunity to study a new landscape with the searching analysis he had brought to views of Mapua and Tasman Bay. **Greymouth** (1950) (*Cat. no. 8*), shows him coming to terms with the abrupt topography of the West Coast and the atmospheric consequences of its exposure to the prevailing westerly airstream. Something of the compressed nature of the narrow strip of coastline, hemmed in all around by gigantic mountains, creeps into this scene, in which the brightness of the foreground colours is tempered by a menacing looking sky in the west. Greymouth also brought more of a town setting to many of Woollaston's studies, encouraging him on occasion to adopt methods of representation that seem to align more closely to the bourgeois lyricism of École de Paris painters like Pierre Bonnard (1867-1947), and Raoul Dufy (1877-1953), than to the tougher analytical inclinations of Cézanne or Picasso. **Window on Greymouth** (1959) (*Cat. no. 13*) is a good example. In this sophisticated studio work Woollaston uses the device of a window to provide the frame-within-a-frame effect often employed by mid-century modernist painters to emphasise the quotidian occupation of the landscape by buildings and other human intrusions. In this work he shows himself thoroughly familiar with contemporary European practice, absorbed, of course, mainly from reproductions. On the other hand Woollaston had, through long practice in the methods of his beloved Cézanne and through his application of Hofmann-style colour theory, evolved an epic style of landscape that he was beginning to express on a much larger scale. Though resident in Greymouth he often revisited the Tasman Bay theme. He was also working vigorously to improve his figurative work. The dual **Tasman Bay/Prisoners of War** (c. 1956) (*Cat. nos. 9 &*

10) reveals the expansive tendency that was emerging in Woollaston's painting in the mid-1950s. The experimental nature of this work is demonstrated by the two images, painted on either side of the same 560 x 895 mm piece of card. Both images can be seen as working towards a grand manner, based firmly on the adaptation of Cézanne's methods to Woollaston's chosen subject matter. Significantly one is a great, deeply receding landscape vista of Tasman Bay, while the other is an essay in depicting the still-topical subject of prisoners of war, conceived along the lines of the great French tradition of painting groups of bathers. The 'bathers' tradition, begun by Poussin in the seventeenth century, was updated at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, by a succession of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist painters including Seurat, Renoir, Cézanne and Picasso, among many others. Here Woollaston is clearly addressing the painterly tradition as much as the more immediate subject matter of POWs in the aftermath of World War II. Woollaston's lively interest in the great tradition of Western art received rich transfusions in 1958 and 1962, when he was awarded travel grants to visit galleries overseas.⁴⁷

The continuing development of Woollaston's painting in an epic direction can be witnessed in the large, vertically oriented **Taramakau** (1962) (*Cat. no. 98*), a dense and succulent evocation of the Taramakau River as it cuts through the precipitous landforms of the West Coast. It was a work from this Taramakau River series that became Peter McLeavey's bold first purchase from Woollaston on his visit to the painter in 1964, as discussed earlier. The fluidity of Woollaston's watercolour technique during the early 1960s is well exemplified by **Otago Cobb Cottage** (1964) (*Cat. no. 100*). The undated watercolour of a young boy (*Cat. no. 101*) probably dates from this period.

IV Erua 1961-66

For two years I had a model on Wednesday evenings. His name was Erua Brown. What was he like? That was what I wanted to draw, but it wasn't at all easy. It didn't come right at first go...I meant him to look Polynesian. I couldn't get that look at first...⁴⁸

While he continued to evolve his large-format landscapes through the 1960s, Woollaston was also determined to achieve a greater command of the figure. With this aim in mind he needed live models. Edith Woollaston was of course his regular model, but he needed others for variety and regularly recruited models from the families of friends and neighbours.

Seeking an unfamiliar subject that would stretch his observational abilities and draughtsmanship, Woollaston persuaded the family of a Greymouth schoolboy, Rodney Gutteridge, to allow the boy to sit as a model after school once a week. Rodney Gutteridge was Māori, with very dark skin. His strongly Polynesian features intrigued the artist as a challenge to his ability to 'get that look'. The arrangement worked well and for two years the artist and his model studied each other with mutual curiosity on Wednesday evenings. The sessions resulted in a large number of detailed studies, which later became known as the **Erua** series.

The James Wallace Arts Trust acquired one of the **Erua** drawings in 1995 (*Cat. no. 16*), and in 2014 the Trust acquired a further 80 drawings from the series. Comprising 79 sheets, with one sheet having an image on both sides, the group probably includes the majority of the drawings Woollaston made in the course of the two-year period during which he had Rodney Gutteridge as a model. All but one of the images are monochrome, in variations of a limited range of black and white media which include pencil, black felt pen, Indian ink applied with both brush and pen, and sometimes Chinese white for highlights. One image, a beautiful watercolour, is coloured (*Cat. no. 81*). The majority of the works are signed and some feature the artist's monogram in addition to the signature.

The discipline Toss brought to the exercise of studying his young Māori model is reflected in the way he has mostly confined his efforts to pencil, ink and wash drawing in monochrome. This is a time-honoured method of study often set by art teachers in training students to concentrate on the linear and volumetric aspects of the subject, without being distracted by problems of colour. With characteristic rigour Woollaston sets himself to test his draughtsmanship and compositional technique in the **Erua** series. The protracted period of study shows that in the early 1960s figure painting and portraiture were just as important to Woollaston as landscape painting. The sustained effort in producing the extended series of drawings also demonstrates his intense and systematic approach to resolving formal problems of representation. Something of the underlying humility of Woollaston's practice is evident in the **Erua** works: while he had been impatient with the teaching methods he encountered at the Canterbury College School of Art in 1931, especially the limited access to life models, Woollaston's early impetuosity does not necessarily imply arrogance, but rather a determination to get closer to the revolutionary spirit that was refreshing the art in Europe in the 1930s. It was in this spirit of pilgrimage that Toss had made his way to the doorstep of Flora Scales in Nelson in 1934, hoping to find instruction in the methods and methodologies that Scales

had absorbed during her time as a student at the Hofmann School in Munich in the late 1920s. The five lessons Scales had allowed Toss helped him immeasurably with his approach to landscape, but she did not provide much help with his efforts to master the figure. Scales had imparted a method of creating effects of depth and prominence in relation to the picture plane through the manipulation of colour relationships. Her teachings were useful for landscape painting, but the same methods applied to figures and faces tended to produce a landscape-like effect in Toss's finished portraits with the subjects often appearing monumental, as if they were made of mountain ranges. Never a sculptor, he realised that he needed to work harder at representing the volumetric aspects of the figure.

During the first trip he made out of New Zealand, in 1958, Woollaston applied himself systematically to the problems of complex compositions with multiple figures. That year he was awarded the annual Association of New Zealand Art Societies Fellowship. He used part of the grant to travel to Melbourne and Sydney to study paintings in the major gallery collections. At the National Gallery of Victoria he encountered for the first time paintings by Monet, Degas and Cézanne. Intrigued by Poussin's *The Crossing of the Red Sea* (c. 1634), with its menacing landscape and complicated figures, he made a series of detailed drawings to analyse the composition.⁴⁹ He was also introduced to Dr Ursula Hoff (1909-2005), Keeper of Prints and Drawings at the gallery and an expert on both historical and contemporary European art. Hoff was impressed with the analytical intelligence of Woollaston's studies after Poussin, encouraged his drawing, and even persuaded the National Gallery of Victoria to purchase several of the drawings for its collection. More significantly, the NGV also purchased a painting, *Edith with a Lamp*, 1942, which was shown in an exhibition of Woollaston's work at the Museum of Modern Art in Melbourne, arranged with the assistance of Woollaston's friend Lina Bryans.⁵⁰ This was a tremendous boost for the painter, in a year in which he also achieved the sale of a major portrait of Edith, *Portrait of the Artist's Wife* (1939) to the Auckland City Art Gallery.⁵¹ Winning recognition from such prestigious institutions suggested there was indeed a future in figure painting for Toss. Flushed with these successes he returned to Greymouth with a renewed sense of purpose. Though his resolve would be severely tested over the next few years, it was in this spirit of renewed optimism that Woollaston once again tackled his own studio practice, leading to the beginning of the **Erua** series in 1961.

The book *Erua*, by Woollaston, was published by Blackwood and Janet Paul in 1966, in a limited edition of 1000 copies (*Cat. no 97*). The name 'Erua Brown' was chosen by Toss to protect the identity of the young model. The unusual spiral-bound volume with its long, narrow format was shaped like an artist's sketch pad. Inside, the book consisted of 48 leaves, each printed on one side only. Each leaf featured a black and white image from the **Erua** series, printed via photolithography on thick, buff coloured paper, with a caption by Woollaston at the bottom. The captions read like diary entries, the artist relating image by image the story of how he met the boy and asked him to model for him:

For two years I had a model on Wednesday evenings. His name was Erua Brown. What was he like? That was what I wanted to draw, but it wasn't at all easy. It didn't come right at first go. This drawing (*Cat. no. 58*) for instance, may be charming, but to me it doesn't look at

all Maori. It was as if history repeated itself. When the early explorers came to the Pacific and their artists drew the 'savages', their drawings often looked like Europeans in fancy dress. Erua, of course, wore his school clothes, so there wasn't even fancy dress to show that I meant him to look Polynesian. I couldn't get that look at first...⁵²

As each page is turned over and a new image is revealed, Woollaston continues his narrative of the modelling sessions. The story is beguiling as Toss relates the mutual incomprehension experienced by the artist and his model as they begin the sessions, gradually turning to friendship. At first the boy doesn't think what Toss is doing is art. Later, when his mother comments that she hasn't seen any of the drawings Toss has produced from the sessions, he tells her, 'you wouldn't understand, Mum, it's modern art'. 'I had two difficulties', wrote Toss, 'a simple one – I couldn't yet draw him as I wanted; and a complex one – if he didn't like what I did he might lose interest in coming to sit for me, and then I would never get done what I wanted. (I paid him, but I felt it might matter more to him that he was interested than that he was paid).' Sometimes Woollaston 'flooded the ink on the paper, because of the richness of his dark colour'.⁵³

After a few sessions the artist and his model lost their initial shyness and Toss could work hard to master the technical problems of representing his subject to the best of his ability. The fact that Rodney Gutteridge moved around a great deal during the sessions didn't bother him – although it did occasionally bother Edith – Toss wanted to get a sense of the model's movement and unique body language into the drawings. 'I would not make him sit still. I wanted to draw the way he moved. What a person is like is in the way he moves as well as in what he looks like sitting still', he commented.⁵⁴ This is of course an extremely important point, perhaps so obvious that for much of Woollaston's career it was overlooked by conservative critics of his art, whose conception of portraiture was still based on traditional images of the subject frozen into one position. Ironically in an era increasingly dominated by the moving image, such attitudes were still widely held. It was the sheer anachronism of this kind of conservative taste that Woollaston was most anxious to confront with his works. The **Erua** series provides a wonderful insight into Woollaston's fascination with movement. Looking through the sequence we also become aware of the critical time element in the drawing sessions, and begin to appreciate the rapid artistic choices Woollaston is making as he works to capture, as quickly and efficiently as possible, not only the model's features but also the way he moves.

The **Erua** drawings had another important effect on Woollaston: partly as a consequence of this experience he developed a more active interest in Māori art. Not long after he completed the series, he was invited to teach classes to school children on the East Coast of the North Island. Here he came face to face with the majesty of the Māori carving tradition, also seeing many of the painted meeting houses, like Rongokarae at Ruatoki, that Roger Neich would document in his influential book *Painted Histories: early Māori figurative painting* some thirty years later.⁵⁵

V Breakthrough and recognition 1965-1986

Peter McLeavey's effective promotion of Woollaston in the mid-1960s ushered in a new period of increasing financial security for the artist. At the beginning of their relationship McLeavey had come simply as an avid collector, keen to acquire a painting by the New Zealand artist who most inspired him. As McLeavey worked to establish his fledgling art business, Toss supplied him with works for sale.

However McLeavey was not responsible for the critical recognition that was beginning to gather momentum in the 1960s. As we have seen, Peter Tomory, the energetic director of the Auckland City Art Gallery, was especially active in promoting Woollaston. It was Tomory who had organised the *Retrospective Exhibition: MT Woollaston, Colin McCahon* that toured New Zealand in 1963, and which provided McLeavey with his first experience of the work of the two painters. Woollaston and McCahon had a well-established, mutually beneficial relationship which, though not always easy, gradually helped both of them to gain respect from established opinion-makers, as they periodically joined forces to paint and exhibit together. McCahon had himself been inspired by seeing Woollaston's first one-man show in Dunedin in 1936, when he was 17. The two artists had exhibited together in 1949 at Helen Hitchings' gallery in Wellington. McCahon was employed as Keeper at the Auckland City Art Gallery in the 1950s and from 1964 as a lecturer at the University of Auckland's Elam School of Fine Arts, (a position which Woollaston also applied for). McCahon's growing influence helped to lift Woollaston's profile even as he worked to promote his own work. The librarian, academic and gallery director Ron O'Reilly (1914-1982) was also exceptionally energetic over several decades in his efforts to promote Woollaston. A television documentary, *Toss Woollaston: Painter*, was made for the NZBC in 1966 by Brian Bell.

Recognition of Woollaston's talent at the highest levels of officialdom was greatly enhanced in the late '60s by Peter McLeavey's successful sales of Woollaston paintings to the government's Department of External Affairs, the groundwork for which had been laid earlier by some art-loving diplomats.⁵⁶ The brilliance of McLeavey's advocacy lay in his recognition of the fact that by reinventing the New Zealand landscape in terms of modern art, Woollaston had something substantial to offer the nation. While McCahon's reinterpretation of New Zealand landforms was also coming to be recognised for its originality, authenticity and power, his works tended to appear gloomy, austere and aloof from daily human life. McCahon's modernism was uncompromisingly existential and self-questioning. By contrast Woollaston's paintings could readily be experienced as optimistic and celebratory. In 1960, when Woollaston had been invited to present a lecture to the Auckland Gallery Associates, he had said 'For most of my life I have known a desire to take some action to harvest the rich emotions that have come to me from landscape'.⁵⁷ The richness of that harvest was now ready to be reaped by people in positions of responsibility for the fortunes of the nation. From a purely commercial point of view, Woollaston's landscapes, filled with light and with the intensity of the love he brought to his treatments of favourite vistas, were potentially more marketable than McCahon's stark, foreboding visions with their portentous words and inscriptions.

Woollaston's landscape paintings grew larger through the 1960s. He usually painted on primed hardboard – less expensive and more easily obtained than stretched canvases – explaining that the resilience of board suited his vigorous brushwork better than canvas.⁵⁸ As gesture became a more dominant factor in his practice he gradually freed himself from the restrictions of working on smaller surfaces, and his application of oil colours acquired the looseness of his watercolour technique without sacrificing anything of the precision of his eye. The preference for choosing elevated lookout points to obtain long views, which he had developed in Mapua in the 1930s, now became a dominant compositional device. Woollaston loved to look down from high above a deeply indented coastline, tracing crenulated shorelines around the feet of high hills, in bird's eye fashion. This form of view often required the horizon line to be placed very high in relation to the picture frame. Although the high horizon was a technique that Flora Scales had encouraged Woollaston to try as a key part of her instructions in modern composition, it also had plenty of precedent in the colonial art of New Zealand, when topographical painters like William Fox, John Buchanan and George O'Brien were coming to terms with the challenges of representing New Zealand's steep, choppy landscapes in their watercolours. These nineteenth century painters were being rediscovered by art historians in the 1960s and institutions like the Alexander Turnbull Library were publishing reproductions of their watercolours, which sold well to an appreciative public. Such images, while ostensibly 'naturalistic' at a superficial level, often required the nineteenth century topographical painters to employ severe distortions in their compositions, in order to represent the details of coastline as seen from a high elevation. In fact these distortions give dramatic tension to watercolours like George O'Brien's bird's eye views of the Otago Harbour.⁵⁹ Woollaston was also interested in this technique. He employs it to great effect in the mighty **Lyttelton Harbour** (1970) (*Cat. no. 103*). Another familiar trope from the canon of New Zealand landscape painting appears in **Lyttelton Harbour** in the shape of the dead tree.⁶⁰

Woollaston was finally able to quit his Greymouth-based Rawleigh's job in 1966. He and Edith moved back to the Nelson district in late 1968, purchasing a house at Riwaka, near Motueka. His dream of independence accomplished, Toss now painted with great intensity, refining his vision and technique with protracted sessions of painting in watercolour out of doors. Nor did he neglect the progress he had made with the intensive **Erua** studies of the beginning of the decade. He carried on sketching people with the same inexhaustible energy that he brought to his landscape work. Hundreds of rapid portrait drawings eventuated, most of which show the artist in the act of working out how best to approach the subject for more formal, finished portraits in oils. **The Studies for David Hewson** (1970) (*Cat. nos. 106 - 108*) for the finished **Portrait of David** (1970) (*Cat. no. 105*) are typical of these lightning sketches. Often three or more such faces are worked over in the same sketch. By comparing the various versions of the pose that Woollaston has recorded in this sequence of works we can witness the care and effort the artist put into obtaining the 'look' that he was trying to 'get'. A fine example of a highly finished portrait from the mid-sixties is the **Portrait of Colin Simpson** (1965) (*Cat. no. 102*). Showing the sitter in a state of serene repose, eyes closed and face flushed as if in refreshing slumber, this jewel-like work is indicative of the psychological insight that was developing in Woollaston's portraiture following his **Erua** works. The landscape-like effect created by the exaggerated architecture of the model's face, and the suggestion of blue sky and deep space beyond, are testament to Woollaston's interest in using colour in an abstract sense to

enhance the illusion of depth. But the suggestion of a dreamlike state of mind in the sleeping sitter's face is undeniable. On the other hand the curious **Portrait of a Seated Character** (1970) (*Cat. no. 104*) is less overtly modern in spirit and more likely the product of one of Toss's periodic forays into tradition, when he turned to the old masters for inspiration. While the chair is clearly the Victorian armchair that inhabited Toss's studio for decades with a personality all of its own, the little figure in the strange hat may derive from a fifteenth century Spanish painting of the *Martyrdom of St Vincent* in the Prado Museum collection, which Woollaston first visited in 1962.⁶¹ He made a version of this painting in 1987, now in the Auckland Art Gallery collection, following another visit to the Prado in 1986.⁶²

Meanwhile, Woollaston's national profile was greatly enhanced by a show of only three works at the Peter McLeavey Gallery, Cuba Street, Wellington in 1971. A bold new phase was unveiled in this show. With a masterly vision of his own, McLeavey had suggested to Toss the idea of up-scaling his increasingly epic landscapes to a truly magnificent size, by painting on whole, factory size sheets of hardboard, 4 x 9 feet in dimension.⁶³ Three gigantic landscapes resulted. It was a stroke of both artistic and commercial genius. Cleverly engineering maximum press coverage, McLeavey arranged for the *Dominion* to have him and Don Binney photographed carrying the long, vivid *Mapua* (1971) across a busy street in downtown Wellington. The landscape was so strongly painted that it could be clearly read in all its gestural potency in the resulting black and white press photograph, which appeared in the *Dominion* on 23 September 1971.⁶⁴ An enthusiastic review by Peter Cape in the *National Business Review* followed up the *Dominion* feature, Cape declaring that 'it would be worthwhile to fly from anywhere to buy one of these oils for the boardroom or the entrance foyer'.⁶⁵ What McLeavey and Cape both realised was that the joy and pride in the New Zealand landscape that Woollaston was able to express in a thoroughly modern and yet still accessible manner, captured a mood of optimism and forward-looking confidence that would appeal to New Zealand's captains of industry, as they sought to promote the country's interests in a rapidly changing global context. The 'interesting experiment'⁶⁶ as Toss referred to it, was a resounding success. McLeavey immediately received offers on the large format landscapes, initiating one of the most remarkable series of paintings in the history of New Zealand art. Woollaston continued to produce the great panoramas throughout the 1970s and well into the '80s. In **Tasman Bay** (1986) (*Cat. no. 115*) he reaches a sensational high point in the evolution of the series, achieving, perhaps more effectively than in any other work, the luminosity and harmony of colour he talks about in his autobiography when describing the painterly effects Flora Scales introduced him to more than fifty years earlier.

Through the mid 1970s Toss came to enjoy his elevated status, and engaged in some personal reflection. He had been drafting versions of an autobiography for many years, and his success made him more confident to address his internal conflicts in public. The **Self-Portrait** of 1976 (*Cat. no. 111*) captures something of the more relaxed attitude he developed towards himself during these successful and happy years. The work is based on his 1942 drawing, reproduced on the cover of *The Far-away Hills*. That drawing in turn is based on Vincent van Gogh's well-known *Self-Portrait in a Straw Hat* in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.⁶⁷ But there is an enormous difference in expression between Woollaston's van Gogh-style drawing of 1942 and the 1976 portrait that derives from it. The early drawing is full of passion and intensity, the artist glowering out from under

the hat brim with a terrifyingly fixity in his eyes, as though he were training a fearsome weapon or infallible searchlight on the viewer. This attitude is quite in keeping with the van Gogh self-portrait that inspired Toss's drawing. The 1976 self-portrait, on the other hand, is serene. The searchlight expression is gone, replaced by a gentle and joyful gaze of self acceptance and subtle humour. The angst has gone. He has won through, and while he can enjoy himself in the moment, in the immediacy of his responses to the beloved land with its hard light and deep blue skies, he still has so much left to give the viewer.

In 1977 the Suter Art Gallery under the directorship of Austen Davies organised an exhibition of nudes by Woollaston which toured the country. Although clothed, the female **Figure** (*Cat. no. 12*) on the verso of **Farm Buildings** (*Cat. no. 11*) may date from this period, as many of the drawings from the Suter feature a female posed in a similar, contraposto stance. The Suter nude show was perhaps indicative of Woollaston's increasingly relaxed attitudes to his own sexuality. While personally neither sexually inhibited nor prudish, Woollaston retained some sense of public propriety which was part of the indelible imprint left on his psyche by his mother's Victorian prudishness. While he remained married to Edith until her death parted them in 1987, Toss engaged in a number of liaisons with women and men throughout their 50-year marriage. Some of these, such as his long affair with Faye Hill through the 1970s, were quite serious. While he produced many drawings and a few paintings of female nudes, the only finished, signed male nude he is known to have painted is the magnificent **Male Nude** (1996) (*Cat. no. 130*) in the Wallace Arts Trust Collection, which is also his last finished, signed oil painting. The absence of male nudes from his oeuvre is perhaps indicative of some residual reticence concerning sexual matters. Certainly in his autobiographical *Sage Tea*, published in 1980 not long after his knighthood, he avoided any detailed reference to homosexual liaisons. It was not until the early 1990s that he explicitly acknowledged his bisexual nature in public.⁶⁸ Another strong portrait from the late 1970s is the **Sheila Buchan at the Piano** (1978) (*Cat. no. 112*) in which the artist looks over the shoulder of the sitter to focus on her intense concentration as she plays.

If **Tasman Bay** (1986) marks a high point in Woollaston's personal redefinition of the New Zealand landscape tradition, it also comes at the end of his long series of giant panoramas. In this sense it is among the definitive works in the series. The work also comes towards the end of the 1980s stock market boom, when Woollaston's landscape paintings were commanding high prices from private and corporate collectors. But Toss would not restrict himself to landscapes simply because they sold well. He remained as fascinated as ever by the human figure and the problems of how to make it seem alive in paint. For this discipline he frequently returned to old master paintings for inspiration. **Nude Woman** (1986) (*Cat. no. 114*) is a beautiful example of Woollaston's homage to the masters of European painting. While he has clearly used a live model, Woollaston has posed her in an attitude similar to Rembrandt's famous paintings of *Susanna and the Elders*.⁶⁹

VI Late masterpieces 1987-1998

In August 1987 Edith Woollaston died following a severe stroke, aged 83. After a hiatus of some months Toss carried on painting, refusing to pine away himself. The scope of his brush widened considerably in the last decade of his life. In particular he worked hard on portraits. He had many models, but tended to use these to address a more limited cast of characters in his personal life. There is a tendency in the late portraits to use a model to represent someone else. Sometimes he used this technique to study himself. Just prior to Edith's death he had completed an unusual **Double Portrait (Mycenae Period Object and Zarn Aberhart)** (1987) (*Cat. no. 116*) which features a weirdly blue face, staring with a disconcertingly ambiguous expression out of the left half of the canvas, while a featureless mop of blond hair seen from the rear occupies the right hand side, with the mysterious word 'Zarn' appearing beside it. 'Zarn' is Zarn Aberhart, the young son of Kerry Aberhart, while the strange blue and white face, with its anarchic expression, is based on an ancient ceramic head from the Mycenae culture, in the National Archaeological Museum, Athens. Toss had come across the Mycenaean head on the cover of *The Mycenaean*, the classic study by Lord William Taylour which had been published in a new edition by Thames & Hudson in 1983.⁷⁰ Peter McLeavey explained further to James Wallace that the **Double Portrait** was autobiographical, with the ambiguous Mycenaean head representing the older, more worldly Toss, while the smooth and rather formless head of the boy Zarn represents the artist at a young and impressionable age.⁷¹ The **Dual Portrait** (1995) (*Cat. no. 128*) is a reprise of this idea. In this more introspective work Toss represents himself with a realistic, contemporary self-portrait on the left, while Kerry Aberhart provides the model for the right hand image. Like the image of Zarn Aberhart in the **Double Portrait**, the head of Kerry Aberhart in the **Dual Portrait** may to some extent reflect an aspect of a younger Toss in the prime of life. Similarly, while the identity of the model for the marvellously feline **Woman with Necklace** (1989) (*Cat. no. 118*) is uncertain, the sexy mood of the painting can possibly be traced to Toss's late-blooming relationship with Anne Martindell. The portrait was chosen to represent New Zealand painting at the EXPO 92 international exhibition in Seville, Spain.

Anne Blair Clark Martindell (1914-2008) was a former US Senator for New Jersey. From 1979 to 1981 she was the US Ambassador to New Zealand. Toss had met her in 1980 when she arrived, somewhat extraordinarily, by bicycle at the opening of his exhibition at the Dowse Art Gallery in Lower Hutt.⁷² Their friendship revived after Edith Woollaston's death, and from 1989 they began to spend months at a time living together, dividing their time between New Zealand and the United States. Now that he was enjoying a rather glamorous lifestyle, Toss's painting was freshly invigorated. He continued to paint as he travelled around the United States with Martindell, especially in watercolours. New landscapes inspired him, and it is fascinating to observe the application of his stylistic and compositional methods to unfamiliar, American terrain. **Lake Placid and Mrs Macey** (1992) (*Cat. no. 122*) depicts the popular wilderness destination of Lake Placid, in the Adirondack Mountains of upstate New York, a location which provided views not unlike those of Queenstown, which he had often painted. New Mexico also provided the sort of views that Toss loved to challenge his brush with. It is interesting to compare the watercolour technique of **The Remarkables** (1974) (*Cat. no. 109*) with that of **Pojoaque (Near Santa Fe)** (1989) (*Cat. no. 117*), painted fifteen years

later. Both works exhibit the fluency of brushwork and warm palette that comes to predominate in Woollaston's later landscapes. Toss also visited Auckland frequently in the late 1980s and 1990s as he worked to promote sales of his paintings through the Aberhart North Gallery. Seeking a quintessentially Auckland subject he focussed on the volcanic island of Rangitoto in the Hauraki Gulf, producing watercolours like **Rangitoto** (1990) (*Cat. no. 124*) and magnificent finished oils like **Rangitoto** (1992) (*Cat. no. 125*). Another large painting in this Auckland sequence, *Auckland Summer 1990*, was acquired in 1999 by Auckland's exclusive Northern Club, facilitated by James Wallace.⁷³

Visits to Kerry Aberhart in Auckland resulted in another wonderful late portrait by Woollaston, **Woman Reading** (1990) (*Cat. no. 120*). The model for **Woman Reading** was Aberhart's partner Lorraine North, who habitually wore her hair tied up. Aberhart recalled that 'Toss came across her one day with it down; he immediately asked if he could paint her that way: "that beauteous golden cascade demands painting!"' When the painting was finished the large nose infuriated the model's father. Ironically Kerry Aberhart noted that 'Lorraine doesn't have a nose of the proportions Toss so generously gave her. Her father, however, DID.' Jack North was 'enraged' - hating his own nose, the father demanded to know 'why should he [Toss] inflict that on my daughter?' Aberhart recalls that Toss, unaware of the outrage he had provoked in her father, spontaneously apologized to Lorraine for the nose, explaining that 'it was necessary as a compositional device'. By contrast Woollaston's dealer, Peter McLeavy, was enraptured by the painting, which he saw in progress in the artist's studio, commenting that it was 'too beautiful – almost [more] a photograph than a painting'.⁷⁴

Woollaston continued to experiment with different approaches to portraiture in the 1990s. One such phase of experimentation is represented in the Wallace Arts Trust Collection by **Blue Stephen** (1990) (*Cat. no. 119*). The title of this meditative portrait of Stephen Lockett, Toss's secretary, refers to the predominantly blue-toned palette, rather than the mood of the sitter, as Toss was experimenting with different colour treatments of the same subject at the time. Exhibition lists from Aberhart North show that he also painted a *Black Stephen* in 1993.

Woollaston continued to revisit the old masters periodically. **Rembrandt's Mother** (1993) (*Cat. no. 127*) is based on Rembrandt's painting *An Old Woman Reading*, also known as *The Wife of Rembrandt's Brother*, 1665.⁷⁵ Kerry Aberhart provides an amusing account of the genesis of this painting with a lovely evocation of Toss's irrepressible sense of mischief and fun:

We talked about its possible symbology – death, the psychological imprint of his own mother and specifically the echo of the drawing of her that became the cover of Sage Tea... When Toss presented it to her, it was subsequently returned to him with a note about 'the hands not being right'. Laughing, Toss and I speculated about the possible reaction to the hands in his version, and his envied 'lack of ability'...that usually formed the audible backdrop to presentation of such obviously 'flawed' works. We got on to the raw gutsiness of Rembrandt's painting; its coarseness when seen in the flesh. I made some comment that when seen in that kind of framework Toss' work made him a 20th century 'Neu Zealand' Rembrandt...More laughter...(God I miss that man's sense of fun)...Back to work; I asked







These and previous pages:
Studies for **Woman Reading**.
Lorraine North sitting for Toss Woollaston.
Photographs by Kerry Aberhart



Toss what the title of the painting was going to appear as: with a twinkle in his very lucid eye, he chuckled: 'Rembrandt's Mother...'⁷⁶

The **Male Nude** (1996) (*Cat. no. 130*) is Woollaston's last completed and signed oil painting. What is so extraordinary about the **Male Nude** is that, unlike so many 'last paintings' by notable artists which usually document a decline, this amazing, full-scale, nude portrait does genuinely represent the culmination of all Woollaston's efforts to evolve a personal style and technique that would completely encompass his painterly concerns. Of course these were wide ranging and sophisticated. From childhood he had been interested in Cézanne through seeing reproductions in books. Though his formal art training was limited, he did have some, and was by no means ever a naive, unschooled talent, making up his own rules. Indeed his younger years are marked by a great respect for the artistic disciplines peculiar to European Modernism, and a corresponding impatience with the conservatism and increasing irrelevance of the art school training that was available to him. Later, when he had established himself as a painter and won some status among peers and knowledgeable critics, he was able to visit the great collections in Europe, Australia and America and see for himself the masterpieces he had long studied in reproduction. The depth of such studies is amply evidenced in the insightful and painstaking drawings he made after the masters. Through the years of his success and prosperity in New Zealand he never lost sight of the tradition he was working in. Woollaston was never a revolutionary, in the sense of throwing out tradition altogether and trying to start again from a cultural *tabula rasa*. Rather, he sought to refresh the tradition of European painting by carefully extracting those elements which could be constructively repurposed in order to celebrate the beauty he saw all around him with his acute and penetrating vision. As the Wallace Arts Trust collection of Woollaston's demonstrates, human form and human psyche were of equal importance to landscape in Toss's drive to represent. The strong religious feelings he grappled with in his youth can be seen as a manifestation of this primal drive to make sense of his surroundings, without an adequate means of expression. When painting became the effective means he sought to express his profound observations both of objective truth and subjective love, his dedication to it was absolute. The devotional aspect of Woollaston's practice produced a sustained development over a period of almost seventy years, so that each new work builds subtly on the progress of the previous work. While in the 1940s and '50s there were periods of interruption in Woollaston's output which were consequences of the impact of the wartime economy and of his need to support a family, there are no periods in which the sustained, incremental and cumulative progress of realising his talent as a painter suffered anything like a reverse. Even in the early 1990s, when Toss was quite ill with prostate cancer, he never lost focus on his goal of continuous improvement.

In the sequence of works from 1987 to 1996, so wonderfully represented in the Wallace Arts Trust Collection, it can be seen that even as he approached the end of his career Woollaston was continuing to liberate his hand from formal constraints to get even closer to the truth of what he saw. In the three great works in this collection that Woollaston painted during 1995 and 1996 it is even possible to see a resurgence of physical energy, while the accuracy of the eye is undiminished. The **Dual Portrait** (1995) (*Cat. no. 128*) is the definitive late self-portrait, with its excellent likenesses of Toss and Aberhart, and its simple but effective compositional device of blocks of warm pigment neatly dividing the pictorial space. No physical or cognitive impairment detracts from the

confidence and intimate charm of this wonderful work. Again, the **Mt Arthur** of 1995 (*Cat. no. 129*) is a marvellous distillation of the best of Woollaston's technical achievements brought into play by the faithful love of the 'far-away hills' that sustained him all his life. The rich harvest of emotions that came to Toss from landscape is reaped. And the **Male Nude**, in all its gloriously warm-toned brushwork, observational truth and empathetic insight, is indeed the ultimate masterpiece of Woollaston's long journey in search of a means of expression commensurate to his profound understanding of the human condition.



Toss on top of Takaka Hill, mid 1990's.
Photograph by Peter McLeavey.

NOTES

1. Jill Trevelyan, *Peter McLeavey: the life and times of a New Zealand art dealer*. Wellington: Te Papa Press, 2013, 43.
2. *A Retrospective Exhibition: M.T. Woollaston, Colin McCahon*. Auckland: Auckland City Art Gallery, 1963.
3. David Alexander, 'Peter Tomory: Distinguished art historian'. *The Independent*, 29 May 2008.
4. Trevelyan, *Peter McLeavey: the life and times of a New Zealand art dealer*, 43.
5. Ibid.
6. The equivalent of a month's wages at his insurance job. Trevelyan, *Peter McLeavey: the life and times of a New Zealand art dealer*, 51-2.
7. Financial support from Charles Brasch (1909-1973), the Dunedin art patron and founding editor of *Landfall*, provided initial support for Woollaston after he quit his Rawleigh's work in 1966. Jill Trevelyan, ed., *Toss Woollaston: a life in letters*. Wellington: Te Papa Press, 2004, 304.
8. Gordon H Brown and Hamish Keith, *An Introduction to New Zealand Painting 1839-1967*. Auckland, Collins, 1969.
9. Trevelyan, ed., *Toss Woollaston: a life in letters*, 350.
10. Trevelyan, *Peter McLeavey: the life and times of a New Zealand art dealer*, 130-1.
11. Trevelyan, *Peter McLeavey: the life and times of a New Zealand art dealer*, 152.
12. *M.T. Woollaston, works 1933-1973*. Palmerston North: Manawatu Art Gallery, 1973.
13. M T Woollaston, *Sage Tea: an autobiography*. Auckland: Collins, 1980, 267.
14. *Evening Post*, 7 September 1968, quoted in Gerald Barnett, *Toss Woollaston: an illustrated biography*. Wellington: National Art Gallery, Auckland: Random House, 1991, 87, footnote 10.
15. Gerald Barnett, *Toss Woollaston: an illustrated biography*. Wellington: National Art Gallery, Auckland: Random House, 1991.
16. Trevelyan, ed., *Toss Woollaston: a life in letters*, 408, 418.
17. James Wallace to Peter McLeavey 20 March 1995, facsimile communication. James Wallace Arts Trust file.
18. Linda Herrick, 'A life spent swimming against the tide'. *Sunday Star Times*, 3 December 1995.
19. The Rutherford Trust Collection was commenced in 1988 under the auspices of the Electricity Corporation of New Zealand, which allocated a proportion of its profits from ownership of the nation's electric power generation plants to the acquisition of works of art by New Zealand artists to form a collection for the enjoyment of the New Zealand public. Following the dissolution of the ECNZ in the 1990s the Rutherford Trust Collection was partially administered by Te Aratoi, the Wairarapa Museum of Art and History in Masterton, before a more permanent custodial solution was agreed with the Wallace Arts Trust. The collection is in the process of being gifted to the Wallace Arts Trust.
20. M T Woollaston, *The Far-away Hills: a meditation on New Zealand landscape*. Auckland: Auckland Gallery Associates, 1962, 10.
21. Arthur Mee's *Children's Encyclopedia* was published in regular instalments, originally by Amalgamated Press in London. It went through various editions and iterations until 1964. The publication that Toss Woollaston remembers from his childhood may be *Harmonsworth*

- Children's Encyclopedia*, edited by Arthur Mee. London: Amalgamated Press, 1922-[25].
22. Paul Cézanne (1839-1906) *Self-Portrait with a Beret*, 1898-99, oil on canvas, 64.1 x 53.3 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1972.950.
 23. Alfred Sisley (1839-1899) *Chemin Montant au Mont Valérien*, 1880, oil on canvas, 50 x 65 cm. Private Collection.
 24. Woollaston, *Sage Tea*, 31.
 25. *Taranaki Daily News Christmas Supplement*, 18 December 1928, 3.
 26. Woollaston, *The Far-away Hills*, 30.
 27. *Ibid.*, 31.
 28. Rollo Arnold. 'La Trobe, William Sanderson', from the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, updated 30-Oct-2013.
 29. Peter Entwisle, *R.N. Field and his circle: the birth of modernism in New Zealand*. Dunedin: Peter Entwisle, 1999.
 30. Woollaston, *Sage Tea*, 231.
 31. *Ibid.*
 32. Trevelyan, ed., *Toss Woollaston: a life in letters*, 26-28, 483.
 33. *Ibid.*, 30-34.
 34. Woollaston, *Sage Tea*, 252.
 35. *Ibid.*, 244-50.
 36. *Ibid.*, 246.
 37. *Ibid.*
 38. A letter apparently dated 26 October 1934 from Woollaston to Rodney Kennedy describes a painting very similar to *Mapua* or *Landscape in Purple* which may in fact be the work in the Wallace collection. See Trevelyan, ed., *Toss Woollaston: a life in letters*, 52.
 39. Woollaston, *Sage Tea*, 252-3.
 40. 'Wilhelm Ostwald – Biographical'. *Nobelprize.org*. Nobel Media AB 2014. Web. 17 Mar 2015. http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/chemistry/laureates/1909/ostwald-bio.html
 41. Wilhelm Ostwald, *Colour Science: authorised translation, with an introduction and notes by John Scott Taylor*. London: Winsor & Newton [1931-]; this was followed by A simple explanation of the Ostwald colour system. London: Winsor & Newton, 1936.
 42. M T Woollaston, *Sage Tea*, 2.
 43. The original source of the 'Mapua mud' comment is unclear. However it was referred to in a 1967 article on Woollaston by John Summers. John Summers, 'The Woollaston Country: a Partisan Review', *Ascent: a Journal of the Arts in New Zealand*, volume 1, number 1, 1967, 5-10. Christchurch: The Caxton Press, 1967. The 'Mapua mud' reference occurs on page 9 of Summers' article.
 44. This drawing was acquired by the James Wallace Arts Trust in 1995 with the title 'Edith Woollaston' – the misidentification has since been corrected by Jill Trevelyan.
 45. Peter Entwisle, 'Kennedy, Rodney Eric', from the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand* updated 29 October 2013.
 46. Trevelyan, ed., *Toss Woollaston: a life in letters*, 151, 167-6.
 47. Trevelyan, ed., *Toss Woollaston: a life in letters*, 207-23, 239-90.
 48. M T Woollaston, *Erua [by] Woollaston*. Auckland: Blackwood & Janet Paul, 1966 (unpaginated).

49. Trevelyan, ed., *Toss Woollaston: a life in letters*, 206-7.
50. M T Woollaston, *Analytical Study of Poussin's 'Crossing of the Red Sea'*, 1958, pencil pen and ink, 228 x 292 mm, National Gallery of Victoria, 48.1-5; M T Woollaston, *Analytical Study of Poussin's 'Crossing of the Red Sea'*, 1958, pencil pen and ink, 377 x 502 mm, National Gallery of Victoria, 48.2-5; M T Woollaston, *Analytical Study of Trevisani's 'Joseph sold by his brethren'*, 1958, pencil, National Gallery of Victoria, 50-5; M T Woollaston, *Analytical Study of Constable's 'The Lock'*, 1958, pencil, 378 x 474 mm, National Gallery of Victoria, 49-5; M T Woollaston, (*Man and Girl*), 1939, brush and ink, National Gallery of Victoria, 47-5; M T Woollaston, *Edith with a lamp*, 1942, oil on cheesecloth on cardboard, 654 x 362 mm, National Gallery of Victoria 91-5. See also Jill Trevelyan, ed., *Toss Woollaston: a life in letters*, 207-20.
51. Sir Mountford Toss Will Woollaston, *Portrait of the artist's wife*, oil on board, 468 x 418 mm, Auckland Art Gallery, 1958/23.
52. Woollaston, *Erua*.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid.
55. Trevelyan, ed., *Toss Woollaston: a life in letters*, 308-11. See also Roger Neich, *Painted Histories: early Māori figurative painting*. Auckland: Auckland University Press.
56. Toss enjoyed telling of taking a friend to New Zealand House on his first visit to London in 1962, to see a painting of his they had hanging there. On his return trip he stayed with a New Zealand diplomat in the United States. Philip Woollaston to Oliver Stead, pers. comm., 27 March 2015.
57. Woollaston, *The Far-away Hills*, 4.
58. Philip Woollaston to Oliver Stead, pers. comm., 29 March 2015. Philip Woollaston also notes that many of the Mapua works were painted on cardboard from boxes obtained from the local grocer.
59. Roger Collins, *Pavilioned in Splendour: George O'Brien's vision of colonial New Zealand*. Dunedin: Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 1986.
60. Michael Dunn, 'Frozen Flame and Slain Tree: the Dead Tree Theme in New Zealand Art of the Thirties and Forties', *Art New Zealand* 13, Spring 1979, 41-5.
61. Anonymous Spanish artist, *The Martyrdom of St Vincent*, c. 1460, oil on panel, Prado Museum. M T Woollaston, *Saint Vincent*, oil on board, 905 x 680 mm, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, 1989/14.
62. For Woollaston's letters on the Prado *Martyrdom of St Vincent*, see Trevelyan, ed., *Toss Woollaston: a life in letters*, 423-24, illustration 434.
63. Philip Woollaston recalls that the first of the large panoramas were done on standard size sheets of hardboard of 4 x 8 feet. Subsequently Woollaston discovered an 'outsize' hardboard sheet product of 4 x 9 feet which was manufactured for use in high stud interiors. Philip Woollaston to Oliver Stead, pers. comm. 27 March 2015.
64. *The Dominion*, 23 September 1971. Reproduced and cited in Barnett, *Toss Woollaston: an illustrated biography*, 88.
65. Peter Cape, 'Art gallery round-up', *National Business Review*, 23 September 1971. Cited in Trevelyan, *Peter McLeavey: the life and times of a New Zealand art dealer*, 130.
66. Trevelyan, *Peter McLeavey: the life and times of a New Zealand art dealer*, 150.

67. M T Woollaston, *Self-Portrait*, 1942, pen and ink on paper, 240 x 240 mm, Hocken Library, 88/102a; Vincent van Gogh, *Self-Portrait with a Straw Hat*, 1887, oil on canvas, 406 x 318 mm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 67.187.70a.
68. See especially Linda Herrick, 'A life spent swimming against the tide', *Sunday Star Times*, 3 December 1995.
69. or example Rembrandt Harmenzsoon van Rijn, *Susanna Bathing*, 1636, oil on panel, 474 x 386 mm, *Mauritshuis*, The Hague, Netherlands; *Susanna and the Elders*, 1647, oil on panel, 766 x 928 mm, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.
70. Lord William Taylour, *The Mycenaeans*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1983.
71. Peter McLeavey to James Wallace, 15 July 2000. James Wallace Arts Trust file.
72. *Waikato Times*, 31 October 1998 (article syndicated from *The Evening Post*).
73. David Williams, QC to Peter McLeavey, 19 November 1999. Copy in James Wallace Arts Trust file.
74. Kerry Aberhart to James Wallace, facsimile letter, 16 September 2002, also KA to JW 3 September 2002; James Wallace Arts Trust file.
75. Rembrandt Harmenzsoon van Rijn, *An Old Woman Reading*, 1655, oil on canvas, 800 x 660 mm, Collection of the Duke of Buccleuch, Drumlanrig Castle, Scotland.
76. Kerry Aberhart to James Wallace, facsimile letter, 27 March 2003. James Wallace Arts Trust file.

SELECT CHRONOLOGY

- 1910 Born 11 April, first of five male children of John Reginald Woollaston and Charlotte Kathleen Frances Woollaston (née Tosswill), sharemilkers, of Huinga, Taranaki.
- 1918 Parents purchase dairy farm at Toko, Taranaki.
- 1928 Leaves home to go fruit picking in Nelson district. Finds orcharding work at Riwaka, Motueka. Joins Suter Sketch Club, Nelson.
- 1929 Returns to Taranaki.
- 1930 In Nelson district, receives art tuition from Hugh Scott at Scott's Collingwood Street Studio, Nelson.
- 1931 Cycles from Nelson to Christchurch to enrol as a student at Canterbury College School of Art. Attends Canterbury College School of Art for two terms. Makes friends with Ursula Bethell. Impressed by paintings of R N Field in Christchurch Group Show, Durham Street Gallery.
- 1932 Cycles to Dunedin to enrol at Otago School of Art, King Edward Technical College, under R N Field. Attends for two terms, joins Six and Four group and meets Rodney Kennedy. Returns to Nelson district when funds run out. Lives at Mapua with Wells family.
- 1933 In Mapua, then attempts to set up as private art tutor in Taranaki.
- 1934 Builds clay-brick studio on Decimus Wells property, Mapua. Receives tuition in art from Flora Scales.
- 1935 Exhibits *Mapua* or *Landscape in Purple* (1934) (Wallace Arts Trust Collection) in Suter Art Society exhibition, Nelson.
- 1936 First one-man exhibition in Dunedin organised by Rodney Kennedy. Marries Edith Alexander in August. Guest exhibitor with The Group in Christchurch.
- 1938 Attends Canterbury College School of Art for two terms. Guest exhibitor with The Group in Christchurch.
- 1940 Obtains permanent orchard employment in Nelson district and is exempted from military service.
- 1949 Briefly employed as labourer in agricultural chemicals factory, and as house painter, before accepting a position as Rawleigh's home products salesman in Greymouth, Westland. Moves family to Greymouth. Exhibits jointly with Colin McCahon at Helen Hitchings Gallery, Wellington
- 1950 - 1957 Joins Westland Art Society. Continues to paint intermittently while employed as Rawleigh's salesman. Paints landscapes in Westland, Canterbury and Nelson districts.
- 1958 Awarded Annual Fellowship by Federation of New Zealand Art Societies and travels to Australia. Exhibits at Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne. National Gallery of Victoria purchases drawings and important oil painting, *Edith with a Lamp*, 1942.

- Auckland City Art Gallery purchases *Portrait of the Artist's Wife*, 1939.
- 1959 Returns to Rawleigh's work in Greymouth. Paints *Window on Greymouth* (Wallace Arts Trust Collection from the Rutherford Trust Collection). Solo exhibition at Gallery 91, Christchurch.
- 1960 Presents autobiographical lecture, *The Far-away Hills*, to Auckland Gallery Associates, Auckland City Art Gallery.
- 1961 Awarded New Zealand Government Arts Council travel grant to visit art collections overseas. Commences sequence of *Erua* studies.
- 1962 Travels to Europe and United States to study paintings in public collections. Auckland Art Gallery Associates publish *The Far-away Hills*. Paints Taramakau River, Westland.
- 1963 Retrospective exhibition of M T Woollaston and Colin McCahon curated for Auckland Festival by Auckland City Art Gallery. Exhibition tours to Wellington and other New Zealand centres.
- 1964 Peter McLeavey travels to Greymouth to visit Woollaston and purchases painting of Taramakau River. Exhibitions at various North Island venues organised by son Philip Woollaston.
- 1965 Solo exhibition at Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland.
- 1966 Gives up Rawleigh's sales work to paint full-time. Peter McLeavey works to establish himself as an art dealer and to promote Woollaston with other artists. *Erua [by] Woollaston* published by Blackwood and Janet Paul.
- 1968 Purchases property in Riwaka, Nelson, and moves there with Edith. First exhibition at Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington.
- 1969 -1970 Selected with 18 other artists to represent New Zealand painting at *Expo 70* exhibition, Japan. Included in touring exhibition of 12 New Zealand contemporary artists shown in United States and Canada.
- 1971 Commences sequence of large scale landscape panoramas. Peter McLeavey becomes Woollaston's exclusive dealer.
- 1973 Major retrospective exhibition of Woollaston organised and toured by Manawatu Art Gallery under directorship of Luit Bieringa.
- 1976 Paints *Self-Portrait* (1976) (Wallace Arts Trust Collection).
- 1978 Awarded Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council grant.
- 1979 Created Knight Bachelor for services to art in Queen's Birthday Honours List. Solo exhibition of portraits and landscapes at the Dowse Art Gallery, Lower Hutt.
- 1980 *Sage Tea: an autobiography* by M T Woollaston published by Collins, Auckland.
- 1985 Exhibits 51 drawings and watercolours at Bishop Suter Art Gallery, Nelson. Presents important collection of drawings to the Bishop Suter Art Gallery.
- 1986 Completes *Tasman Bay* (1986) (Wallace Arts Trust Collection), among the last of the large landscape panoramas.

- 1987 Edith Woollaston dies. Visits Europe and United States with Peter McLeavey. Represented by Aberhart North Gallery in Auckland and Loft Gallery, Motueka, in addition to Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington.
- 1989 Visits United States with Anne Martindell. Paints scenes in New Mexico. Paints *Woman with Necklace* (1989) (Wallace Arts Trust Collection).
- 1990 Visits to Auckland, paints *Woman Reading* portrait of Lorraine North, (Wallace Arts Trust Collection).
- 1991-2 Major retrospective exhibition of Woollaston organised and toured by National Art Gallery, Wellington. *Woman with Necklace* (1989) (Wallace Arts Trust Collection) exhibited in New Zealand pavilion at *Expo '92*, Seville, Spain.
- 1993-5 Regularly visits United States with Anne Martindell. Purchases property in Upper Moutere with Stephen Lockett. Paints *Kina from Harley Road* (1993) (Wallace Arts Trust Collection from the Rutherford Trust Collection).
- 1995 Major acquisition by James Wallace Charitable Arts Trust of 23 paintings and drawings. Paints sequence of paintings of Mt. Arthur, Kahurangi National Park.
- 1996 Completes *Male Nude* (1996) (Wallace Arts Trust Collection), the last authenticated completed, signed oil painting by M T Woollaston.
- 1998 Dies at Upper Moutere, Nelson.

CATALOGUE OF WORKS



1.

M T WOOLLASTON

Figure Drawing, 1931

Ink on paper

250 x 180 mm

95.016

Wallace Arts Trust Collection

Figure Drawing dates from Woollaston's enrolment at Canterbury College School of Art in Christchurch in 1931. Toss was encouraged to enrol there by a member of the Suter Art Society sketch club in Nelson, Hugh Scott, who gave the young artist some tuition in painting at his Collingwood Street Studio. At the School of Art in Christchurch Woollaston was frustrated at being denied access to the nude model until his third year, and successfully negotiated admittance to the life class at an early stage of the course. However his funds ran out after two terms and he returned to Taranaki. Woollaston's confident drawing demonstrates his developing draughtsmanship as he learns to analyse the essential features of the live model, who is modestly clad in a brief loincloth.

2.

M T WOOLLASTON

The Head of the Huinga Valley, Taranaki c. 1933

Oil on board

427 x 520 mm

15.089

Wallace Arts Trust Collection

In **The Head of the Huinga Valley, Taranaki**, Woollaston depicts the valley in which he spent his early years while his parents were sharemilkers. In 1918 the Woollastons bought their own farm at nearby Toko.

In 1933, Woollaston's painting and composition was influenced by the English painters W H Allen (1894-1988) and R N Field (1899-1987), who had emigrated to Dunedin under the visionary La Trobe Scheme initiated by the Department of Education to bring modern methods of art training to New Zealand art academies. Woollaston trained under Field in 1932 at Otago Art School. In **The Head of the Huinga Valley** Woollaston uses blocks and patches of colour to define the geometric planes and volumes of the distant hills in a well-resolved view of his home valley, interpreted through the lens of contemporary English modernism as it was taught and practiced in Dunedin by Allen and Field.

The Head of the Huinga Valley was likely painted towards the end of 1933, while Woollaston was staying either with his own family in the Huinga area, or with the Arthur family, who owned a motor lodge in Ratanui, New Plymouth. Toss sold the work to Mrs Arthur for two guineas. A 1994 letter to Kerry Aberhart from Woollaston mentions in relation to the title that the artist 'grew up in mid-valley, and went to the top of the 'Side-paddock Hill' to get this view.





3.

M T WOOLLASTON

Mapua, 1934

Oil on canvas

475 x 620 mm

95.017

Wallace Arts Trust Collection

Mapua shows a view across Tasman Bay from near the clay-brick studio that Woollaston built on the orchard property of Decimus Wells and his family at Mapua. Woollaston worked on the Wells orchard in the 1930s and became friends with the family. The two white structures that look like figures are gantries in the port of Mapua.

Sometimes referred to by Toss as **Landscape in Purple**, the painting shows the influence of Nelson painter Flora Scales (1887-1985), who had trained in modern painting at the Hans Hofmann School in Munich, Germany, in the early 1930s. Scales taught Woollaston the so-called 'push-pull' method of manipulating colours so that one patch of colour seemed to recede into the background while another patch seemed to project outwards. This method could be substituted for conventional linear and atmospheric perspective techniques to create a sense of depth and volume through colour.

Woollaston was delighted with the work and exhibited it at the annual Suter Art Society exhibition in Nelson with the bold price tag of 100 guineas or £105, provoking a sarcastic comment in the Nelson Mail that the painting took pride of place for price. The work featured prominently in Woollaston's first one-man show in Dunedin in 1936, and he gave it to Edith Alexander as an engagement present before the couple married in Dunedin in August of that year. **Mapua** remained in the possession of Edith Woollaston until her death in 1987.

4.

M T WOOLLASTON

Gramophone, 1936

Ink on paper

260 x 200 mm

95.037

Wallace Arts Trust Collection

Valmai Moffett (1907-2003) was a musician whose portrait was drawn and painted by Evelyn Page (1899-1998) as well as Toss Woollaston in the 1930s. A talented professional cellist, Moffett was living in Christchurch in 1936, estranged from her husband John Moffett, literary editor of the *Otago Daily Times*, who had been helpful to Toss in promoting his first one-man show in Dunedin that year. Toss and Edith Woollaston stayed with Valmai Moffett in September 1936 on their way north to Mapua to take up residence in Toss's mud-brick studio following their wedding in Dunedin in August.

The preliminary sketches of Val Moffett's face that appear in this otherwise finished and signed drawing are typical of Woollaston's rapid sketching style as he works through different approaches to capturing his subject.





5.

M T WOOLLASTON

Mrs Hugh Scott, 1939

Graphite on paper

255 x 190 mm

95.018

Wallace Arts Trust Collection

Leila Scott was the wife of Nelson artist Hugh Scott (1869-1944). The Scotts were English and came to Nelson in the early 1920s. Toss Woollaston met them through the Suter Sketch Club in Nelson in 1928. Hugh Scott, who had trained in art in England and Europe, gave Woollaston further tuition at his Collingwood Street Studio, and encouraged the young artist to seek further training at Canterbury College School of Art. Woollaston remained friends with the Scott family for many years.



6.

M T WOOLLASTON

Rodney Kennedy, 1939

Oil on card

600 x 460 mm

94.111

Wallace Arts Trust Collection

Toss Woollaston met Rodney Kennedy (1909-1989) at the Otago Art School in 1932 when both young men were studying painting under the guidance of English artist R N Field (1899-1987). Field had come to New Zealand under the visionary La Trobe scheme initiated by the Department of Education to import teachers of modern art practice to teach at New Zealand academies of fine art.

Rodney Kennedy was a victim of poliomyelitis as a child and remained small and rather awkward as a lasting result of the debilitating illness. The strangely child-like proportions of his figure are revealed in this analytical study, conceived and painted by Woollaston in a style influenced by the work of French master Paul Cézanne (1839-1906).



7.

M T WOOLLASTON

Mapua, 1946

Watercolour on paper

220 x 290 mm

95.019

Wallace Arts Trust Collection

The fluency of Woollaston's watercolour technique after twelve years of more or less continuous application to the landscapes of Mapua can be seen in this rapid watercolour sketch.

Woollaston continued to develop his painting techniques during the tough war years, when the artist was principally occupied with his employment on an orchard, and in raising a growing family with his wife Edith in their mud-brick home at Mapua. Orchard work was considered essential to the war effort and Toss's permanent orchard job exempted him from military service, while his friend Rodney Kennedy, a staunch pacifist, was imprisoned for the duration as a conscientious objector.

8.

M T WOOLLASTON

Greymouth, 1950

Oil on cardboard

430 x 570 mm

95.020

Wallace Arts Trust Collection

In 1949 Woollaston accepted a position as a travelling salesman of Rawleigh's home products, based in Greymouth on the West Coast of the South Island, moving his family there from Mapua where they had lived since 1936. In Greymouth Woollaston joined the Westland Art Society and continued to paint whenever he could fit the activity in around his Rawleigh's sales work. **Greymouth** shows him coming to terms with a new set of land forms and atmospheric conditions after many years of painting landscapes in the Nelson region, capturing the rapidly changing light and weather of the West Coast town.

9.

M T WOOLLASTON

Tasman Bay/(verso) **Prisoners of War**, 1956

Oil on card

560 x 895 mm

95.021

Wallace Arts Trust Collection

Although he was mostly resident in Greymouth in the 1950s Woollaston made periodic visits to paint landscapes in other parts of New Zealand. In 1956 he revisited his beloved Tasman Bay in the Nelson district. The evolution of his landscape compositions towards an epic style worked out on larger boards and canvases can be seen in this large-scale oil sketch, which looks forward to the gigantic panoramas of Tasman Bay, and other great coastal views, which Woollaston began in the early 1970s.

The use of quickly applied washes of well-thinned oil paints which characterises much of Woollaston's oeuvre is very evident in **Tasman Bay**. Woollaston uses a limited range of earth tints, carefully chosen according to a system of graded 'intervals' between primary colours which derives from the colour theories of Walter Ostwald (1886-1958), a German chemist who devised a specialised theory of colour for use by artists.

10.

M T WOOLLASTON

Prisoners of War/ (verso) **Tasman Bay**, 1956

Oil on card

560 x 895 mm

95.021

Wallace Arts Trust Collection

Prisoners of War is an essay in the tradition of composing figures in groups of 'bathers', which began in 17th century European painting, especially in the works of Nicholas Poussin and other French and Italian artists. The tradition was revived in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by painters like Cézanne, Renoir and Picasso. Woollaston's prisoners owe much to Picasso's famous 1907 painting *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. Version O)*, in the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

In the 1950s Woollaston was often short of money and resorted to painting on cardboard from boxes obtained from the local grocer. Often he painted images on both sides of the card.





11.
M T WOOLLASTON
Farm Buildings/ (verso) Figure, undated
Oil on board
450 x 800 mm
02.035
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



12.
M T WOOLLASTON
Figure/ (verso) Farm Buildings, undated
Oil on board
800 x 450 mm
02.035
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



13.

M T WOOLLASTON

Window on Greymouth, 1959

Oil on canvas paper on hardboard

810 x 611 mm

R.141

Wallace Arts Trust Collection from the Rutherford Trust Collection

Window on Greymouth was painted following Woollston's return to Greymouth from his first visit overseas. In 1958 he was awarded the Annual Fellowship of the Federation of New Zealand Art Societies which allowed him to travel to Australia, to study paintings in the collections of the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne and the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. He held an exhibition of his own work at the Museum of Modern Art in Melbourne, and the National Gallery of Victoria purchased several of his drawings after old master paintings, as well as a major portrait, *Edith with a Lamp* (1942). The sophisticated use of a frame-within-a-frame motif Woollaton has used to capture this charming view is indicative of the fresh inspiration and confidence he gained through exposure to modern and historical paintings in the superb Australian collections.



14.
M T WOOLLASTON
Untitled – Portrait, c. 1960
Ink on paper
360 x 260 mm
14.332
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



15.
M T WOOLLASTON
Head No. 1, 1960
Ink on paper
360 x 260 mm
14.331
Wallace Arts Trust Collection

16.

M T WOOLLASTON

Erua, 1961

Ink on paper

360 x 260 mm

95.022

Wallace Arts Trust Collection

Erua, 1961, is the first of the large sequence of **Erua** studies acquired by the James Wallace Arts Trust. 'Erua' was a pseudonym chosen to protect the identity of the young Maori schoolboy, Rodney Gutteridge, who modelled for Woollaston once a week after school over a two-year period between 1961 and 1962.

In the early 1960s Woollaston was working hard to improve his understanding of the human figure and how to represent it in the context of modern painting and compositional techniques. Woollaston used a variety of models during this period, mostly recruited from among family and friends. In the extended sequence of **Erua** drawings, Woollaston is especially interested in capturing a sense of the restless movement and unique body language of the model.

The name 'Erua' was not given to the series until 1966, when the folio book *Erua* by Woollaston was published in Auckland by Blackwood and Janet Paul. Featuring 48 black and white reproductions of drawings in the Erua series the spiral book was designed to have the look and feel of the artist's sketchbook.





17.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
275 x 375 mm
14.091
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



18.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink and white paint on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.092
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



19.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink and white paint on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.093
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



20.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink and white paint on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.094
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



21
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.095
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



22.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink and white paint on paper
275 x 375 mm
14.096
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



23.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink and wash on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.097
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



24.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.098
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



25.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Pencil on paper
275 x 375 mm
14.099
Wallace Arts Trust Collection

26.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink, wash and white
paint on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.100
Wallace Arts Trust Collection

27.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.101
Wallace Arts Trust Collection

28.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.102
Wallace Arts Trust Collection

29
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink and wash on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.103
Wallace Arts Trust Collection





30.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, c. 1962
Indian ink on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.104
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



31.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
375 x 275mm
14.105
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



32.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
375 x 275mm
14.106
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



33.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
375 x 275mm
14.107
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



34.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink and white oil pastel on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.108
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



35.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.109
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



36.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.110
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



37.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.111
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



38.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
275 x 375 mm
14.112
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



39.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.113
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



40.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink and white pastel on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.114
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



41.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink and white pastel on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.115
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



42.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper. Another **Erua** series
drawing (14.116b) is on verso.
375 x 275 mm
14.116
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



43.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper. Another **Erua** series
drawing (14.116a) is on verso.
375 x 275 mm
14.116
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



44.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
275 x 375 mm
14.118
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



45.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.119
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



46.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Felt pen on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.120
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



47.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Felt pen on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.121
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



48.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Felt pen on paper
275 x 375 mm
14.122
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



49.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Felt pen on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.123
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



50.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Felt pen on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.124
Wallace Arts Trust Collection

51.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
275 x 375 mm
14.125
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



52.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Felt pen on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.126
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



53.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
275 x 375 mm
14.127
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



54.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.128
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



55.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Felt pen on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.129
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



56.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.130
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



57.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indelible felt pen on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.131
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



58.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Felt pen on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.132
Wallace Arts Trust Collection

59.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
275mm x 375 mm
14.133
Wallace Arts Trust Collection





60.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indelible felt pen on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.134
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



61
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.135
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



62.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.136
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



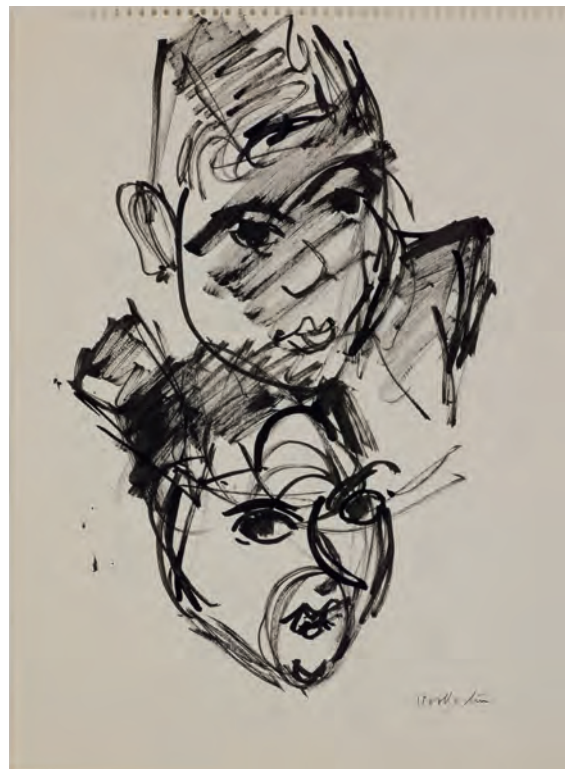
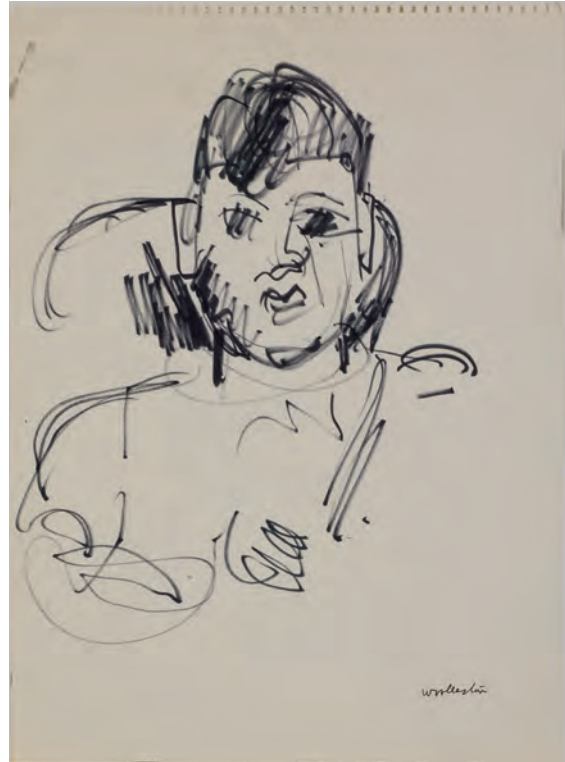
63.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.137
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



64.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.138
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



65.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.139
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



66.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.140
Wallace Arts Trust Collection

67.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indelible felt pen on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.141
Wallace Arts Trust Collection

68.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.142
Wallace Arts Trust Collection

69.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.143
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



70.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.144
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



71.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink and white oil pastel on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.145
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



72.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.146
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



73.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink and white paint on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.147
Wallace Arts Trust Collection

74.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink and white paint on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.148
Wallace Arts Trust Collection

75.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.149
Wallace Arts Trust Collection

76.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink and white oil pastel on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.150
Wallace Arts Trust Collection

77.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink and white oil pastel on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.151
Wallace Arts Trust Collection





78.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indelible felt pen on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.152
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



79.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.153
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



80.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
275mm x 375 mm
14.154
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



81.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Watercolour on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.155
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



82.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink and oil pastel on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.156
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



83.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink and oil pastel on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.157
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



84.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink, oil pastel and white paint on paper
275 x 375 mm
14.158
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



85.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink and pencil on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.159
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



86.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indelible felt pen on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.160
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



87.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.161
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



88.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink, white oil pastel and white paint on
paper
375 x 275 mm
14.162
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



89.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink, white oil pastel and white paint
on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.163
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



90.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink and white oil pastel on paper
275 x 375 mm
14.164
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



91.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.165
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



92.

M T WOOLLASTON

Erua, 1961

Indian ink and white oil pastel on paper

275 x 375 mm

14.166

Wallace Arts Trust Collection



93.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.167
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



94.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.168
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



95.
M T WOOLLASTON
Erua, 1961
Indian ink, white oil pastel and wash on paper
375 x 275 mm
14.169
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



96

M T WOOLLASTON

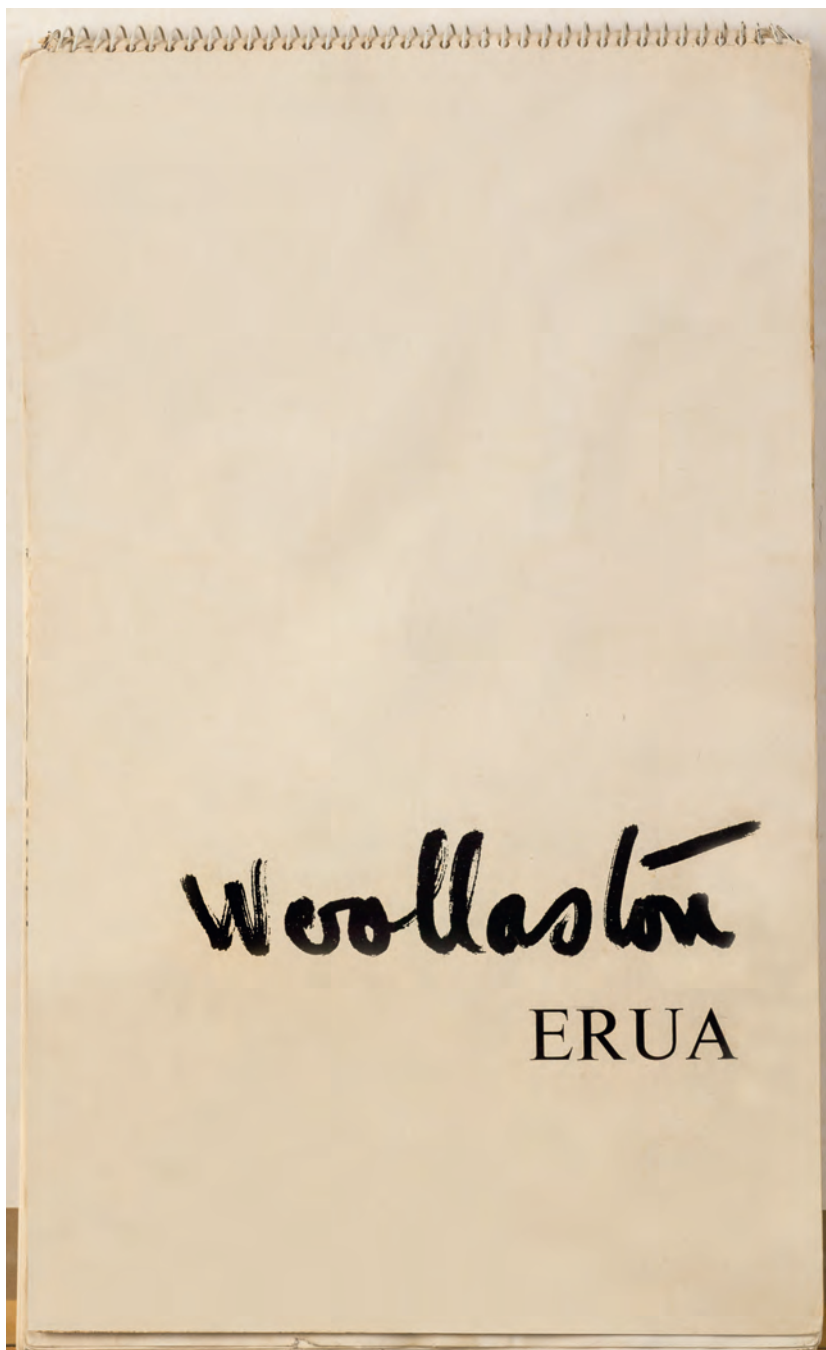
Erua, 1961

Indian ink on drafting paper

610 x 405 mm

14.170

Wallace Arts Trust Collection



97.

M T WOOLLASTON

Erua [by] Woollaston, 1966

Auckland, Blackwood & Janet Paul, 1966

Printed book, limited edition of 1000

48 illustrations 200 x 340 mm

97.103

Wallace Arts Trust Collection

In the two years between 1961 and 1962 Woollaston made a large number of studies of Greymouth schoolboy Rodney Gutteridge. Toss's son Philip Woollaston helped sort and curate the drawings. He estimates that there were between 50 and 100 drawing sessions and several images would be produced per session.

In 1965 the idea was floated of producing a book of the drawings. A grant from the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council of New Zealand assisted independent publishers Blackwood & Janet Paul to publish *Erua by Woollaston* in 1966, in a limited edition of 1000 copies. The spiral-bound, folio-style volume was designed to look and feel like the artist's sketch book. The pseudonym 'Erua Brown' was chosen to protect the identity of the model.

Philip Woollaston helped Toss to select 48 of the Erua drawings, and to write and edit the entertaining captions which document the experiences of artist and model as, with growing trust and understanding, they go through the process of sitting and studying. Many of the Erua drawings that feature in the *Erua* book are now in the collection of 81 **Erua** works in the Wallace Arts Trust Collection.



98.

M T WOOLLASTON

Taramakau, 1962

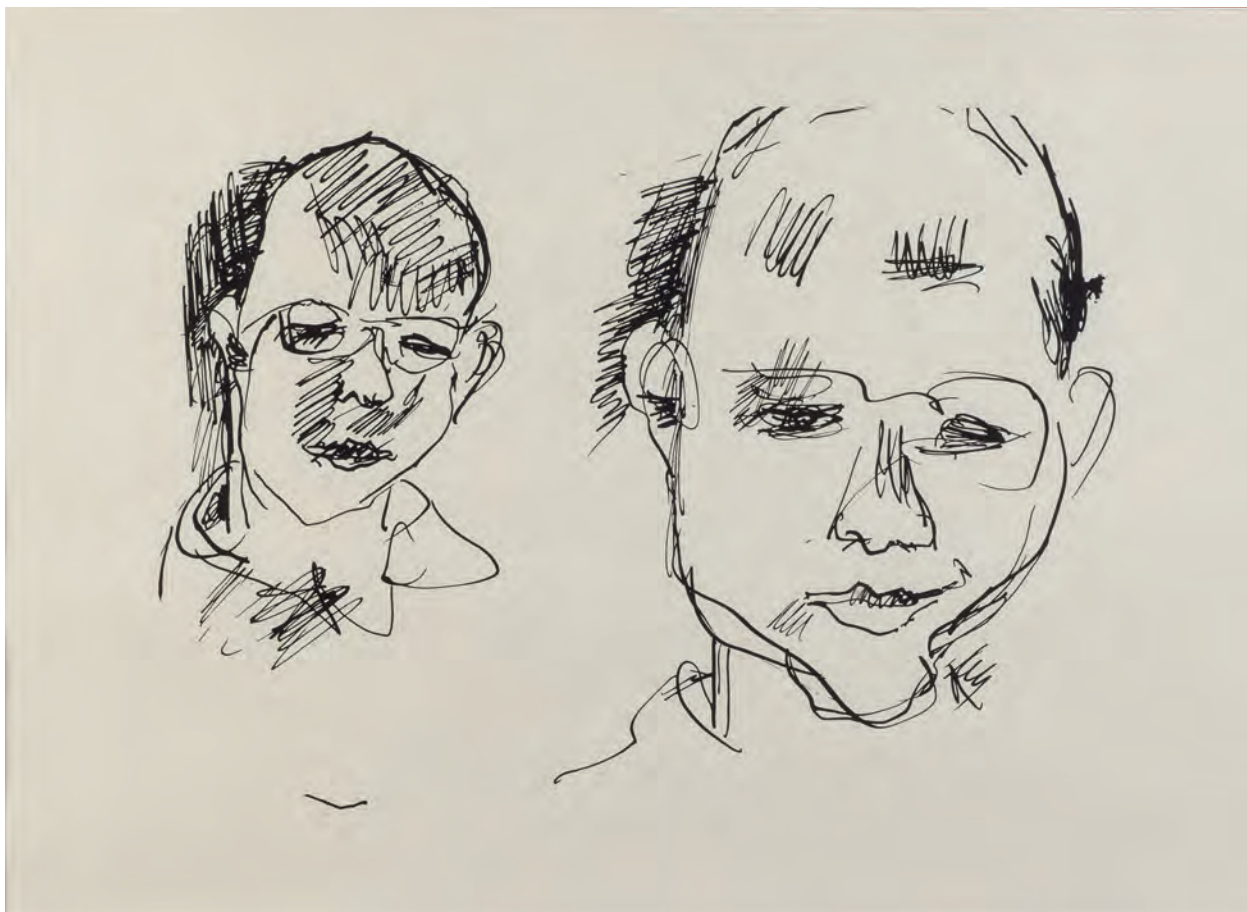
Oil on board

900 x 740 mm

04.207

Wallace Arts Trust Collection

At the beginning of the 1960s Woollaston was beginning to despair of ever being able to free himself of his work as a Rawleigh's home products salesman and devote himself to painting full time, supporting himself by his art. While he was increasingly gaining a reputation as one of New Zealand's foremost modern painters, the market for his work was limited in the conservative social environment of the period. Towards the end of the 1950s Woollaston had begun to increase the size and scope of his paintings, and to look for dramatic landscapes that would be suitable for the new scale. The Taramakau River which runs across the Southern Alps from Canterbury into Westland presented a wonderful subject for a scaled-up vision and a more sombre mood. It was a work of the Taramakau River series that became the first purchase from Woollaston by Peter McLeavey in 1964. McLeavey would go on to found the Peter McLeavey Gallery in Wellington in 1968, and become Woollaston's principal dealer.



99.

M T WOOLLASTON

Patrick Lucas, 1968

Screenprint, unlimited edition issued by
Barry Lett Galleries, 1968.

640 x 805 mm

01.037

Wallace Arts Trust Collection



100.

M T WOOLLASTON

Otago Cob Cottage, 1964

Watercolour on paper

290 x 370 mm

555.270

Wallace Arts Trust Collection

Otago Cob Cottage was the first work of art ever purchased by Sir James Wallace, and the first work in the Wallace Arts Trust Collection of modern and contemporary New Zealand art, now numbering over 8000 works.

Otago Cob Cottage is an excellent example of the increasingly free and fluid approach to watercolour technique that Woollaston evolved steadily from the mid-1930s onwards. His watercolour technique was essential to his work on large scale oil paintings, for studying the essentials of a landscape or human subject, for working out the details of a larger composition, and for rehearsing the gestural application of colour that would eventuate in larger finished oils. Woollaston's watercolours are richly packed with information about the process of conceiving his grander works, yet they can also be treasured for their delightful simplicity and sheer enjoyment of colour.



101.
M T WOOLLASTON
Portrait of a Young Boy, undated
Watercolour
355 x 255 mm
04.188
Wallace Arts Trust Collection

102.

M T WOOLLASTON

Portrait of Colin Simpson, 1965

Oil on board

595 x 440 mm

96.109

Wallace Arts Trust Collection

While Woollaston's focus on the abstract aspects of the sitter's features is well emphasised in his **Portrait of Colin Simpson**, a psychological dimension is suggested by the sitter's closed eyes and evidently tranquil features, as if asleep and peacefully dreaming.

Philip Woollaston has commented that over the course of the many conversations about painting he had with his father, Toss revealed that when painting or drawing he focussed on what was physically in front of him when he was looking at the sitter for a portrait, rather than inferring mental states. He sought to represent the physical object of the model's face by lines, planes and colours on the two-dimensional surface. In this respect Woollaston's approach to the human figure and face was similar to his approach to landscape.





103.
M T WOOLLASTON
Lyttelton Harbour, 1970
Oil on board
960 x 1200 mm
95.023
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



104.
M T WOOLLASTON
Portrait Of A Seated Character, 1970
Oil on card
470 x 380 mm
04.156
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



105.

M T WOOLLASTON

Portrait of David, 1970

Oil on board

795 x 595 mm

02.129

Wallace Arts Trust Collection

Portrait of David is an especially fine example of the relatively large-scale, finished portraits in oil on board that Woollaston was producing at the beginning of the 1970s. Though he never made concessions to convention either in style or in flattering his subject, Woollaston's reputation as a tough analytical portrait painter resulted in several portrait commissions in 1969 and 1970.

While Woollaston's love of the French painter Cézanne (1839-1906) is clearly evident in **Portrait of David**, the way he uses combinations and juxtapositions of colours to suggest space and volume is uniquely his own. In the 1930s Woollaston had studied the colour theories of Wilhelm Ostwald 1853-1932, a German chemist and Nobel Prize winner who published a number of works on colours and colour-mixing especially for the use of artists. Adapting Ostwald's theories to his own practice Woollaston discovered that by carefully manipulating the intersections between colours the artist could create the optical sense of depth and volume to analyse the features of his subjects. The technique worked equally well for landscape and portraits where the primary interest for the artist lay in analysing the spatial and volumetric aspects of the subject.

While tending towards the abstract in terms of its handling of paint, **Portrait of David** also has a strong psychological aspect in its evocation of the sitter's absorption in the book he is reading.



106.

M T WOOLLASTON

Studies for David Hewson, 1970

Pencil on paper

350 x 260 mm

02.130

Wallace Arts Trust Collection

The series of **Studies for David Hewson**, acquired by the Wallace Arts Trust along with the finished **Portrait of David** in 2002, make a wonderful demonstration of Woollaston's compositional technique. Worked out through sequences of rapidly executed drawings, compositional options are tested as the artist captures the essential shapes and volumes of his subject. Experimentally, Woollaston rotates the head and shoulders through a series of subtle changes, brings the frame nearer or further from the subject, and decides whether or not to include the detail of the model's hand resting on the open book he is absorbed in reading. All of these options and decisions, made entirely using line as the medium, will be reinterpreted in the final oil painting when bold brushstrokes and patches of oil colour, rather than lines, will be used to define space and volume.



107.
M T WOOLLASTON
Studies for David Hewson, 1970
Ink & pencil on paper
365 x 255 mm
02.131
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



108.
M T WOOLLASTON
Studies for David Hewson, 1970
Ink on paper
350 x 250 mm
02.132
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



109.
M T WOOLLASTON
The Remarkables, 1974
Watercolour on paper
270 x 360 mm
95.024
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



110.
M T WOOLLASTON
Jeremy Classen, 1975
Watercolour on card
750 x 490 mm
95.025
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



111.

M T WOOLLASTON

Self-Portrait, 1976

Oil on board

760 x 500 mm

95.026

Wallace Arts Trust Collection

Self-Portrait is based on a much earlier line drawing by Woollaston, of 1942, now in the collection of the Hocken Library. The drawing appeared on the cover of Woollaston's 1962 published lecture, *The Far-away Hills: a meditation on New Zealand landscape*. Featuring the artist staring intensely out from under a straw hat, the 1942 drawing is based on Vincent van Gogh's famous *Self-Portrait in a Straw Hat* (1887) in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

As a reprise of the earlier drawing, the large, finished **Self-Portrait** of 1976 is quite different in flavour. Where the drawing is intense, edgy with a sense of mixed angst and drive, the **Self-Portrait** is much more serene. In 1976 Woollaston was at last self-supporting through his work and had gained reputation and respect after many years of hardship. His winning confidence shines through this rare self-portrait.



112.
M T WOOLLASTON
Sheila Buchan at the Piano,
1978
Oil on board
800 x 600 mm
04.230
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



113.
M T WOOLLASTON
David Fowler, 1979
Watercolour on paper
445 x 300 mm
94.109
Wallace Arts Trust Collection

114.

M T WOOLLASTON

Nude Woman, 1986

Oil on board

630 x 410 mm

95.028

Wallace Arts Trust Collection

Although a determinedly modern and contemporary artist from the very beginning of his career, Woollaston also liked periodically to take inspiration from older masters. He visited Australian art museums in 1958 and in 1962 travelled for the first time to Europe and the United States, often making drawings after the old masters as part of his study and research into the methods and traditions of painting. In **Nude Woman** Woollaston acknowledges the great Western painting tradition of masters like Rembrandt and Rubens, by posing his nude model in an attitude reminiscent of images of the biblical story of Susanna and her bath.



115.

M T WOOLLASTON

Tasman Bay, 1986

Oil on board

1200 x 2600 mm

95.027

Wallace Arts Trust Collection

Among the most magnificent of the long series of gigantic landscape panoramas commenced by Woollaston in 1971, **Tasman Bay** is also one of the last in the sequence. As such it represents the culmination of all of the essential elements that Woollaston brought together in these epic works. The powerfully gestural language of his brushstrokes efficiently blocks out the topography of sea, shore, and distant mountains. The luminosity of colour Woollaston sought to achieve through considered colour combinations reaches its full potential in the marvellous alloy of blues and greens contrasting with the bright yellow ochre that highlights the mountain tops.



116.

M T WOOLLASTON

Double Portrait, (Mycenae Period Object and Zarn Aberhart), 1987

Oil on board

810 x 1180 mm

00.076

Wallace Arts Trust Collection

The strange blue face in this intriguing double portrait is derived from a ceramic head from the ancient Mycenae culture, now in the National Archaeological Museum, Athens. 'Zarn' is Zarn Aberhart, the son of Kerry Aberhart, director of Aberhart North Gallery and Woollaston's Auckland dealer in the late 1980s and 1990s.

Woollaston conceived this unusual work with the idea of a notional dual self-portrait in mind. He had become interested in the Mycenaean head from the cover of a new edition of Lord William Taylour's classic study *The Mycenaean*, published by Thames & Hudson in 1983. In Woollaston's own interpretation of the dual image, the ancient Mycenaean face represents himself in the worldliness and experience of old age, while the rather shapeless mass of the young boy's head, with its amorphous mop of hair, is intended to suggest the youthful innocence and exuberance of the young Toss Woollaston.

117.

M T WOOLLASTON

Pojoaque (Near Sante Fe), 1989

Watercolour on paper

255 x 350 mm

12.277

Wallace Arts Trust Collection

Pojoaque (Near Sante Fe) was painted on Woollaston's first visit to New Mexico. He made this visit in the company of his friend and companion Anne Martindell (1914-2008). Martindell was a former US Senator for New Jersey and was US Ambassador to New Zealand from 1979 to 1981. Woollaston first met Martindell in 1980 at the opening of his exhibition at the Dowse Art Gallery. After the death of Woollaston's beloved wife Edith in 1987, Martindell and Woollaston revived their friendship and lived together for extended periods in New Zealand and the US until Woollaston's death in 1998.

In **Pojoaque (Near Sante Fe)** we can see Woollaston's vivacious watercolour technique coming to terms with an unfamiliar landscape to produce a convincing representation which invites comparisons of the North American setting to similar works painted by the artist in Central Otago, New Zealand.





118.

M T WOOLLASTON

Woman with Necklace, 1989

Oil on board

1200 x 1690 mm

95.029

Wallace Arts Trust Collection

Woman with Necklace was chosen to represent New Zealand painting at the *Expo 92* Exhibition in Seville, Spain. While the identity of the glamorous model is uncertain, the sexy mood of the painting may be linked to the late-blossoming relationship between Toss Woollaston and Anne Martindell, the former US Senator and Ambassador to New Zealand, in whose company the artist spent a great deal of his later life.

119.

M T WOOLLASTON

Blue Stephen, 1990

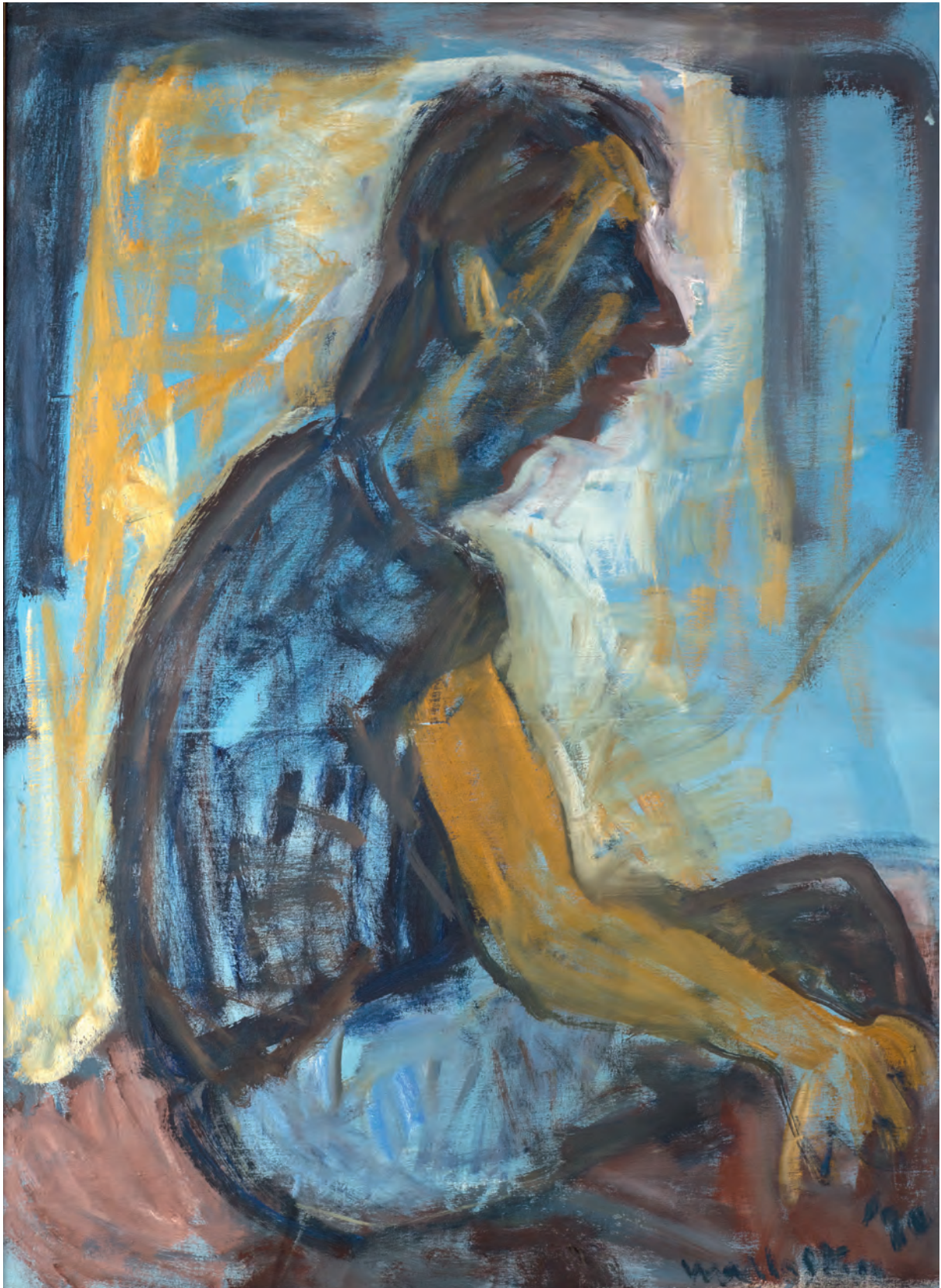
Oil on canvas

1230 x 923 mm

95.034

Wallace Arts Trust Collection

The model for **Blue Stephen** was Woollaston's secretary Stephen Lockett. The 'blue' in the title refers to the predominantly blue palette in which Woollaston has rendered the portrait, not to any implied psychological state. Woollaston made portraits of Stephen Lockett in several different colour 'keys' in the early 1990s.





120.

M T WOOLLASTON

Woman Reading, 1990

Oil on board

600 x 800 mm

02.133

Wallace Arts Trust Collection

Woman Reading was purchased by the Wallace Arts Trust from Kerry Aberhart in 2002.

Correspondence between Aberhart and Sir James Wallace reveals that the subject is Aberhart's partner Lorraine North, who habitually wore her hair tied up. Aberhart recalled that 'Toss came across her one day with it down; he immediately asked if he could paint her that way: "that beautiful golden cascade demands painting!"'

When the painting was finished the large nose infuriated the model's father. Ironically Kerry Aberhart noted that 'Lorraine doesn't have a nose of the proportions Toss so generously gave her. Her father, however, DID.' Hating his own nose Jack North demanded to know 'why should he (Toss) inflict that on my daughter?' Aberhart recalls that Toss, unaware of the outrage he had provoked in the father, spontaneously apologized to Lorraine North for the nose, explaining that 'it was necessary as a compositional device'. By contrast Woollaston's dealer, Peter McLeavey, was enraptured by the painting, which he saw in progress in the artist's studio, commenting that it was 'too beautiful – almost [more] a photograph than a painting'.



121.
M T WOOLLASTON
Tasman Bay, 1991
Oil on canvas
900 x 1200 mm
95.030
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



122.

M T WOOLLASTON

Lake Placid and Mrs Macey, 1991

Oil on canvas

850 x 1170 mm

95.033

Wallace Arts Trust Collection

Lake Placid is a popular wilderness resort in the Adirondack Mountains in upstate New York. In 1991 Toss Woollaston visited Lake Placid in the company of his American friend and companion Anne Martindell.

The views around Lake Placid are not unlike those encountered in the vicinity of Queenstown and Wanaka in Central Otago, and while the Adirondack terrain was new to Woollaston in the early 90s, the unspoiled natural setting of forested mountains, interspersed with romantic lakes, provided views that appealed immensely to his interests and passion for depicting 'far-away hills'. His interest in entertaining characters is also charmingly captured in the caricature-like representation of the garrulous Mrs Macey, one of the more memorable individuals Woollaston encountered on this visit.



123.

M T WOOLLASTON

Pah Hill with Half Moon, 1992

Oil on board

760 x 980 mm

95.032

Wallace Arts Trust Collection

Pah Hill with Half Moon is one of an extensive series of images of Pah Hill, near Woollaston's home at Kelling Road, Upper Moutere, where he spent the final years of his life. Many of the Pah Hill images show the moon in different phases, with subtly different lighting according to the phase of the moon and other local and ambient conditions. Pah Hill is a site of great importance to Maori, with an archaeological record of human habitation that dates back to the time of the earliest Polynesian arrivals to New Zealand. Sited at the inland boundary of the intensively cultivated flats of the Riwaka and Motueka Rivers, Pah Hill for Woollaston was a natural analogue of Cézanne's Mont Sainte Victoire in Provence, France – a feature which the artist painted over and over again, in many different moods and guises.



124.
M T WOOLLASTON
Rangitoto, 1990
Watercolour on paper
210 x 295 mm
95.031
Wallace Arts Trust Collection



125.

M T WOOLLASTON

Rangitoto, 1992

Oil on board

957 x 1196 mm

94.077

Wallace Arts Trust Collection

In the late 1980s and early 1990s Woollaston was interested in expanding his sales in Auckland. As the largest centre in New Zealand Auckland also had the largest number of art galleries, and buyers who often paid the highest prices for works of New Zealand art. Woollaston and his principal dealer, Peter McLeavey of the McLeavey Gallery in Wellington, selected Kerry Aberhart of Aberhart North Gallery in College Hill, Auckland, to be Woollaston's northern representative. Woollaston made a number of visits to Auckland at the time, often staying with Kerry Aberhart and his partner Lorraine North. Seeking Auckland subjects for his brush, and hoping to attract Auckland customers for his paintings, Woollaston made a number of studies of the volcanic island of Rangitoto in the Hauraki Gulf, of which **Rangitoto**, 1992, is a fine example. Woollaston's efficient analytical approach to the subject can be seen in the watercolour study of **Rangitoto**, 1990.

126.

M T WOOLLASTON

Kina, from Harley Road, 1993

Oil on hardboard

1108 x 1207 mm

R.060

Wallace Arts Trust Collection from the Rutherford Trust Collection

Kina, from Harley Road, 1993, is one of the outstanding masterpieces of the Rutherford Trust Collection which was set up in the 1980s by the former Electricity Corporation of New Zealand to collect works of New Zealand art, and which is now administered by the James Wallace Arts Trust.

The powerful, decisive brushstrokes and consummate command of atmospheric perspective in the sensational **Kina, from Harley Road**, demonstrate that Woollaston was painting with undiminished vitality and truthfulness to his subject matter almost to the very end of his life. His friend and dealer Kerry Aberhart has commented that Toss 'never made things up' – as a painter Woollaston was determined to paint the truth of the landscape as he saw it as accurately as possible. Here unusual cloud formations, rapidly defined in broad descending brushstrokes, help to create a sense of meteorological drama and great depth of field in the view.





127.

M T WOOLLASTON

Rembrandt's Mother, 1993

Oil on board

690 x 600 mm

95.035

Wallace Arts Trust Collection

The title of **Rembrandt's Mother** contains a deliberate art historical inaccuracy. The painting was inspired by a famous portrait by the Dutch painter Rembrandt Harmenzsoon van Rijn (1606-1669), called *An Old Woman Reading*, or, *The Wife of Rembrandt's Brother*, 1665 (Collection of the Duke of Buccleuch, Drumlanrig Castle, Scotland). But while painting this homage to the famous work by Rembrandt, Woollaston was also thinking about his own mother, whose Victorian sentiments, especially about sex, haunted him all his life. He was thinking particularly about a drawing of his mother, made around 1933, which appears on the cover of his 1980 autobiography, *Sage Tea*. When he sent this drawing as a gift to his mother she returned it with a note to say that the hands were 'wrong'. The remark was typical of much uninformed criticism levelled at Woollaston throughout his career, as he often sacrificed representational detail in order to capture the essence of his sitters more effectively. Kerry Aberhart recalls Woollaston discussing these matters while working on this painting. When Aberhart asked him what he was going to call the painting, Woollaston laughingly replied, 'Rembrandt's Mother'.



128.

M T WOOLLASTON

Dual Portrait, 1995

Oil on canvas

598 x 829 mm

01.065

Wallace Arts Trust Collection

Woollaston rarely painted himself, and the 1976 **Self-Portrait** in the Wallace Arts Trust Collection is one of only a very few finished self-portraits by the artist. However later in his career Woollaston painted two unusual double portraits, the extraordinary **Double Portrait (Mycenae Period Object and Zarn Aberhart)**, of 1987, and this **Dual Portrait** of 1995. In this work the left-hand portrait is of Toss himself, aged 85, portrayed somewhat introspectively, as though reviewing his career as a painter. The model for the right-hand portrait is Toss's Auckland dealer Kerry Aberhart, the father of Zarn Aberhart who appears in the 1987 **Double Portrait**. In these closely related works, painted eight years apart, the Aberhart figures suggest the idea of the developing artist, first as a young boy, then as a grown man in the prime of life, while the mature artist looks on with the wisdom of years.



129.

M T WOOLLASTON

Mt Arthur, 1995

Oil on canvas

900 x 1210 mm

95.036

Wallace Arts Trust Collection

Towards the end of his painting career, Woollaston, now in his mid-eighties, returned to the subject of Mount Arthur, in the Kahurangi National Park, which had fascinated him since his first arrival in the Nelson district in 1928. A magnificent new sequence of Mt Arthur paintings resulted from this fresh burst of energy, culminating in works like this magnificent landscape in which all the elements of Woollaston's art and vision are brought together to reap the 'rich harvest of emotions' the artist experienced from landscape.

130.

M T WOOLLASTON

Male Nude, 1996

Oil on board

900 x 1270 mm

01.007

Wallace Arts Trust Collection

The model for **Male Nude** may have been Jeremy Wakefield, who modelled for other, clothed studies by Woollaston in the mid-1990s. This magnificent study is almost certainly the last documented, signed and completed oil painting by Woollaston, as he ceased painting altogether not long after completing this work. Despite his ongoing battle with prostate cancer, in 1996 Woollaston could still muster great resources of energy for painting. He brings all of his painterly talent and diligently acquired knowledge of the human form to this masterly work – truly a celebration of all that he has worked so hard and so successfully to achieve in paint, in an extraordinary career of almost seven decades as a leader of modern art in New Zealand.



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